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ISSUE 27 NOVEMBER 2004
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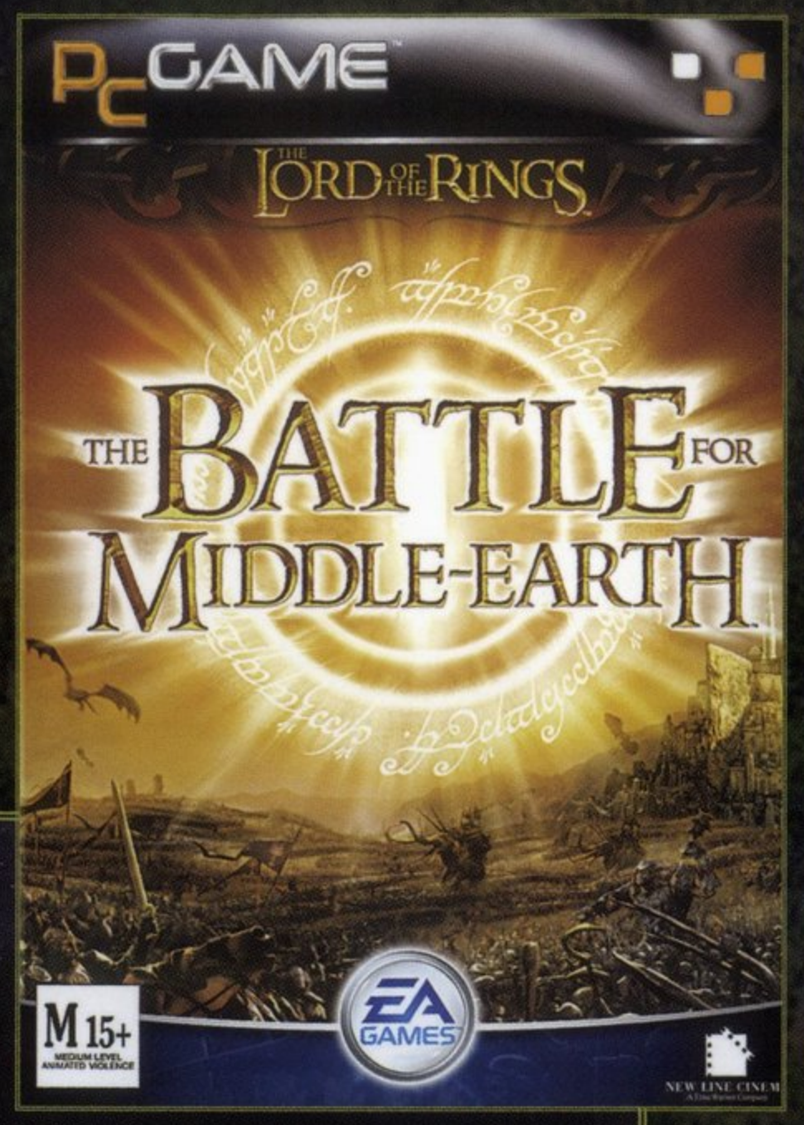
AXIS & ALLIES CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH



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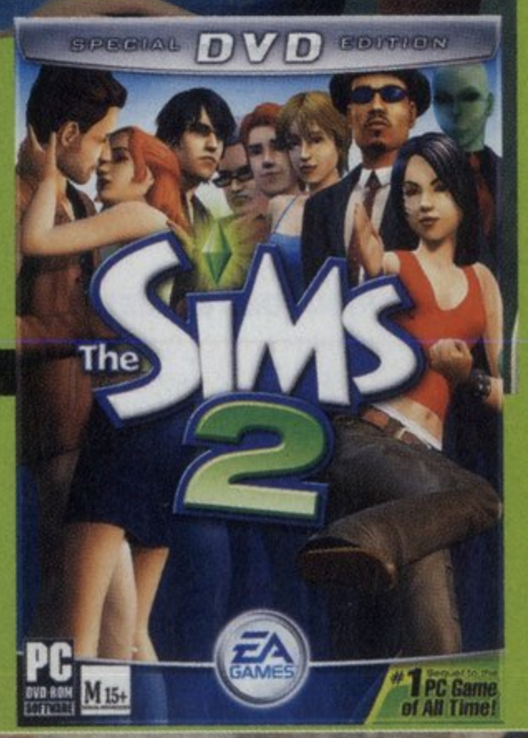

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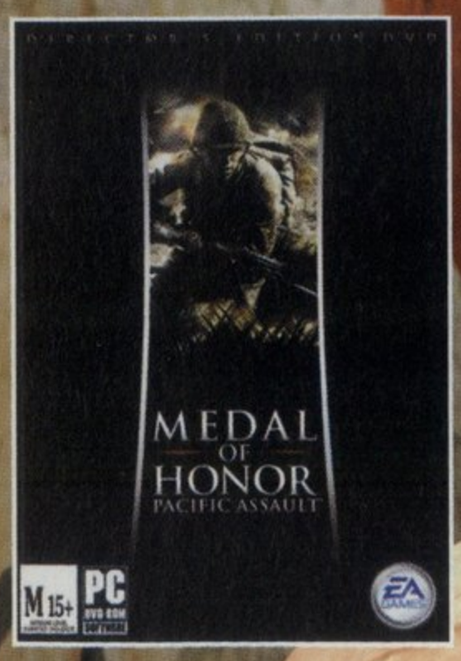

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DERWENT HOWARD

This month, we've been...

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PWNING...
...terrorist derriere all over the shop. The Source-y beta is out and *Counter-Strike* is reborn.

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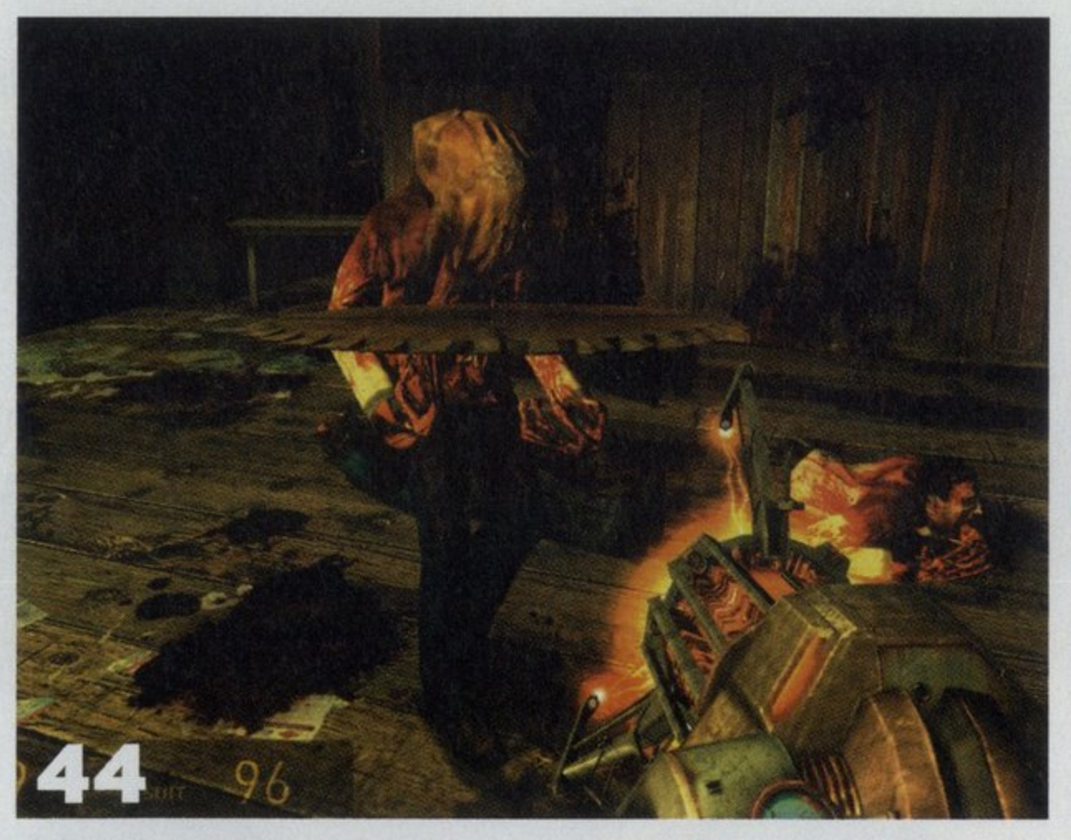
WOOING WOMEN...
...in the Carribean of all places. Merry japes, sailing and spading in *Sid Meier's Pirates!*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OPENING THE VALVE...
...that unleashes *Half-Life 2*. Jim went, he played, and came back a gibbering, teary-eyed wreck. Better than the original? The best game of all time? You get to find out now at long last...

64

FIXING BAYONETTES...
...and charging in to *Call of Duty: United Offensive*. Take that, and that, and some of this as well.

62

HAVING A BALL...
...with *FIFA 2005*. After years of letting *Pro Evolution be* the innovator. EA strikes back!

Spec-tacular

Funnily enough, if I never took to growing my hair down to my arse, was lazier about shaving and I'd kept wearing glasses instead of contact lenses, then I'd probably look something like this. I'm fortunate that I don't, but *Half-Life* is a game that's always made me feel fortunate. I felt fortunate to be the first person in Australia to play and finish the first *Half-Life*, and I also felt fortunate that my ludicrously high score of 97% went on to be absolutely bang on the money, and not something people accused me of taking money for (I'm still looking forward to rejecting that first corporate bribe proposal after nearly ten years in journalism).

I don't feel so fortunate that things saw Jim reviewing *Half-Life 2* rather than myself, but quite frankly, I just feel fortunate that games like Valve's latest opus are being made, and that it's not the only game worthy of attention at the moment.

Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War, *Colin McRae Rally 2005*, *Evil Genius*, *United Offensive*, and *Star Wars: Battlefront* are all more than worthy, and we're left with little to bitch about aside from the fact there's simply not enough time to throw one's self into all of these great releases at once.

Oh well, who needs sleep?

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

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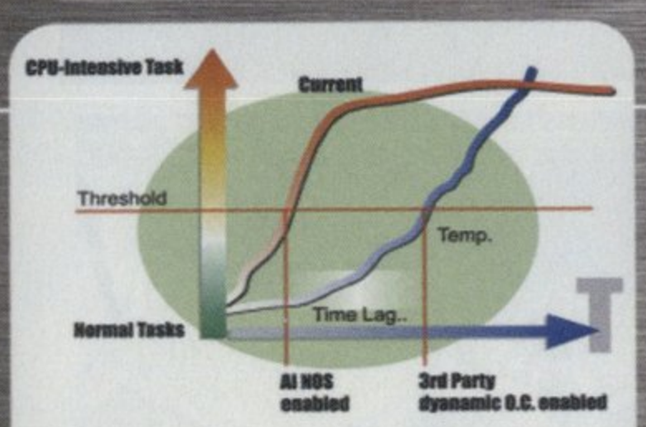

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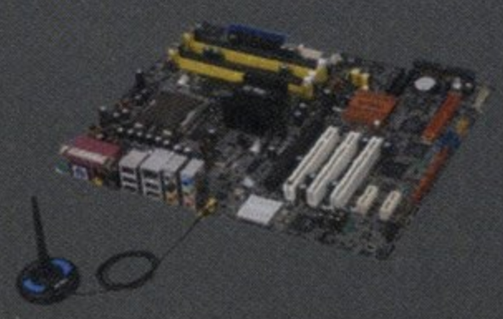

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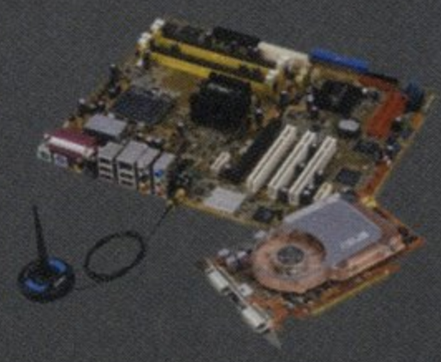

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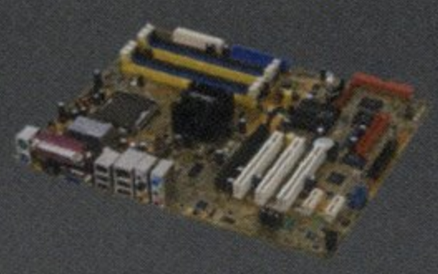

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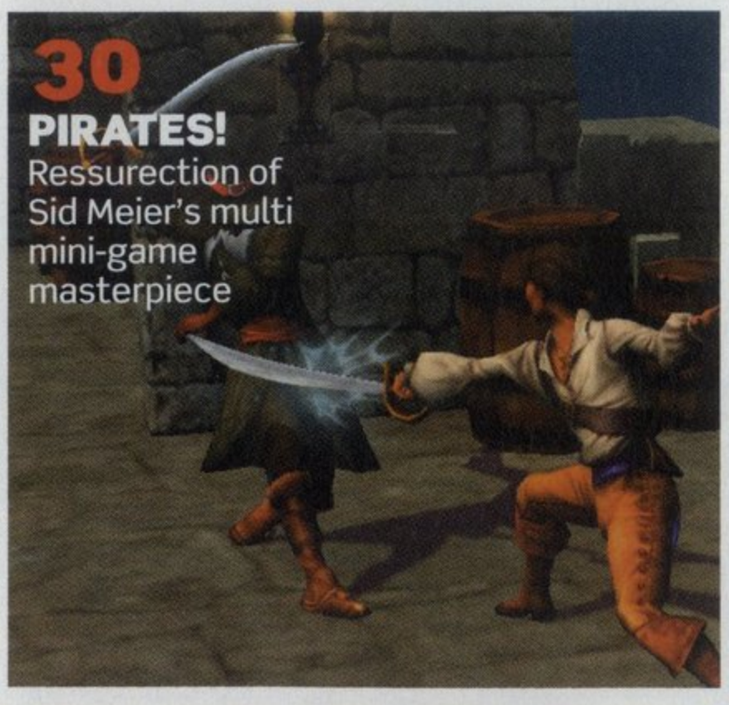
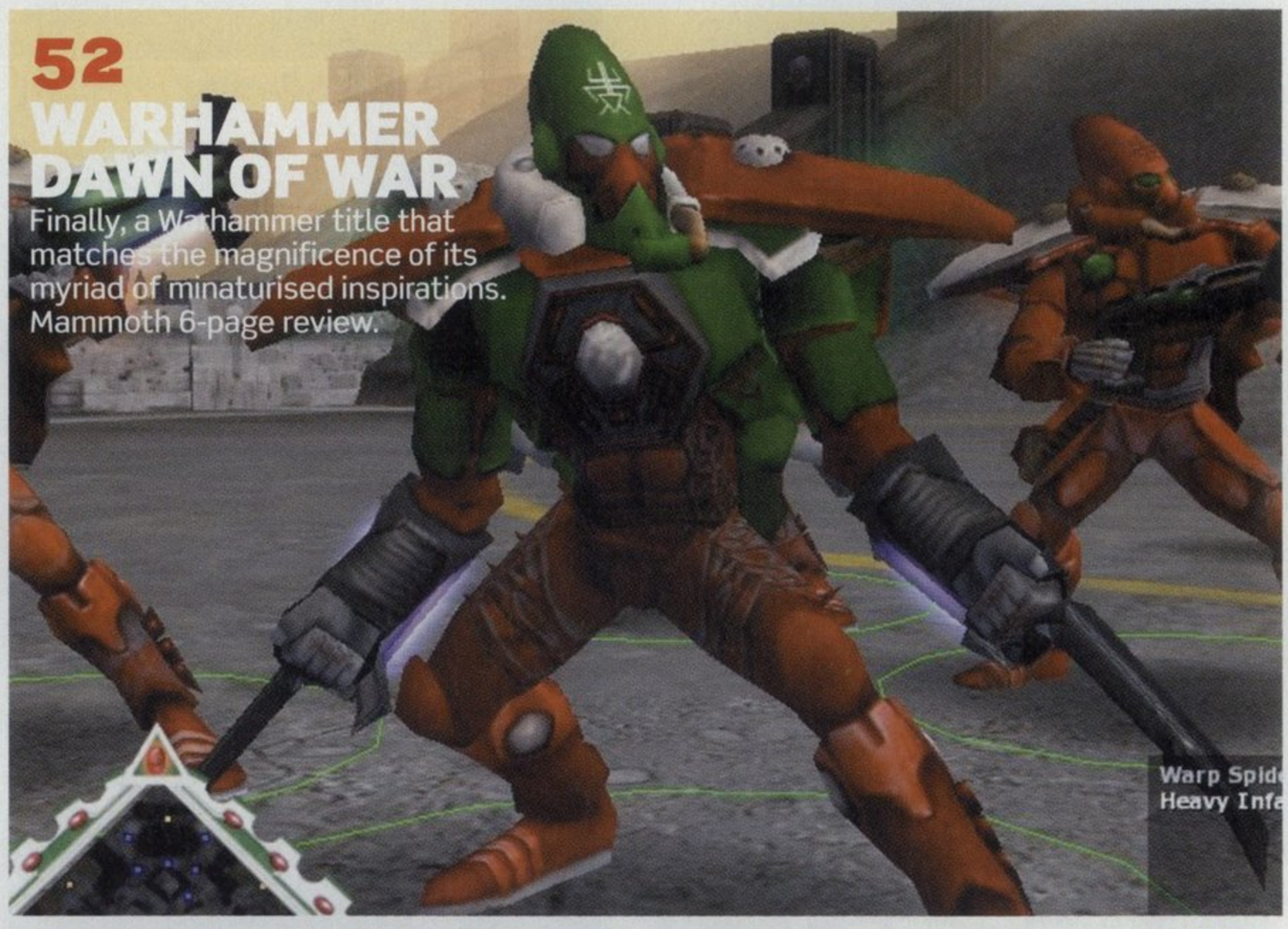


30 PIRATES!
Ressurection of Sid Meier's multi mini-game masterpiece



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Finally, a Warhammer title that matches the magnificence of its myriad of minaturised inspirations. Mammoth 6-page review.

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The future of consumer society. Let us deliver the magazine to your door each month. This month's subscribers stand to win one of five **Topfield TF5000PVRt** set-top media recorders worth $1,099!

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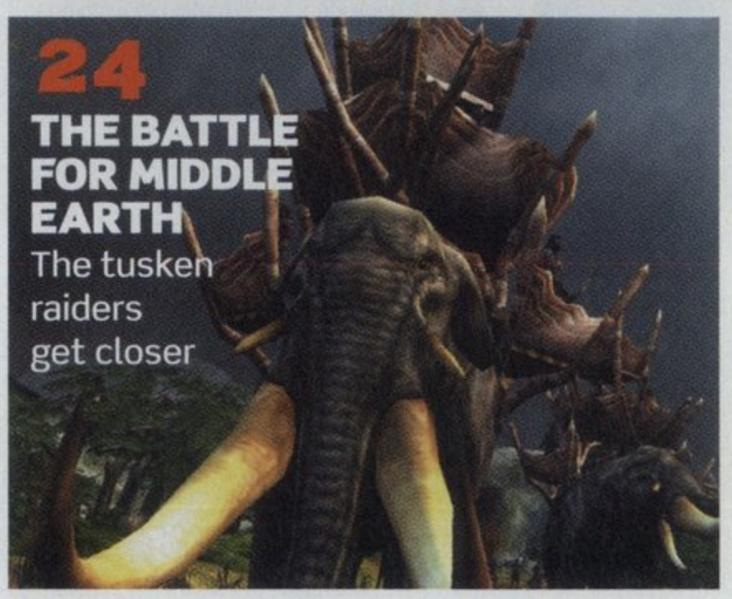

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Hour upon hour of circular entertainment.

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A bunch of things you're dying for, whether you know it or not yet.

ON THE DISC PC GAMES ADDICT is more than just a magazine. Articles sporting this sign are enhanced by extras on the disc.

"THIS IS THE BEST SHOOTER EVER MADE"
- PC POWERPLAY

"YOU MAY END UP IN HELL
BUT IT SURE IS HEAVEN GETTING THERE."
96% - PC POWERPLAY

"ATMOSFEARIC!"
91%- PC GAMES ADDICT

"ONE OF THE MOST
TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED
GAMES RELEASED TO DATE."
9.5/10- ATOMIC

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THAT HELL COULD BE THIS MUCH FUN."
- THE AUSTRALIAN

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Eyewitness

YOUR MOST WANTED

Latest info on the games *you* want

They say humans and their pets resemble one another, but they don't necessarily say what parts.

1 HALF-LIFE 2 TESTING TESTING

Normally, if a game is reviewed in the same issue, it's dropped from Most Wanted. But Valve had such an astonishing news month, and you all voted for it, so we thpought a teary-eyed farewell to the regular updates was in order.

Gabe Newell recently announced on the HL2Fallout.com forums that HL2 was going gold (ie, finished and manufactured for the shops) in a few days. The internet news pages went nuts, fans sites celebrated in a virtual way, but there was a small problem. It wasn't true.

Gabe's HL2Fallout.com password had been cracked, and it was the cracker that made the post. It must have taken whole seconds to work through Gabe's labyrinth security procedures. His password? 'gaben'. Yes - his first name plus the first letter of his second name.

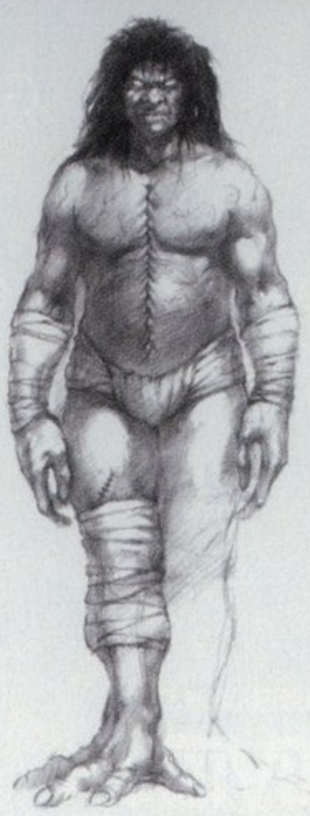
But what do you expect when Valve actively encourage hacking? They've been urging the fansite regulars to follow a series of challenges in order to access secret artwork.

One test involved visiting Half-life.com, going to the media page and hovering over images. Clicking on the one that flashes up the G-Man takes you to a password protected page. Username 'nova', password 'prospekt'.

Can you pick up the trail? Try it.

Official ETA Spring, surely now?
We say Retailers reckon Nov 5

Marketing people: every time you say "product", we shoot a civilian.



2 STALKER BORN SLIPPY

The post-apocalyptic shooter won't be with us until early 2005, sadly. The developers claim the game is 95%, but it would seem that publishers THQ have taken the decision to push the game back. They are releasing a number of other major games over the Christmas period, and having your own titles fighting each other for customers is bad business.

So, while we wait, we've dug up some details about 'Capture the Artefact', *Stalker*'s Capture the Flag variant. Typical flag capturing games are frantic deathmatches with

ess

teamwork. Not so *Stalker*. The 'anomalies' of the singleplayer game – pockets of dangerous radiation with supernatural properties – still exist, so you must keep your wits and be on the lookout for localised breakdowns in reality, as well as flags.

Official ETA Early 2005
We say Let's say January, then

3 HALO 2 THROWN A BUNGIE

When they're not confusing cinema-goers (see 'I Love Bees', page 128) Bungie are playtesting and refining their *Halo* sequel. It's looking so good that Craig has already booked a dirty weekend away for just him and his Xbox. As yet, no PC-related announcement has been made. It's inevitable, but the pain of looking on and waiting saddens PC gamers everywhere. It must be ours!

The multiplayer looks like it'll be an instant classic, with destructible Warthogs, heat-seeking rockets and ram-raiding ghosts. You'll be able to play as the Covenant, hold two guns at once and wield the stabby golden sword of death the Elites used to slice away at the Master Chief in *Halo*. Singleplayer: the Covenant have finally reached Earth. Ulp.

Official ETA Hah!
We say December 2005

We're worried that a plot twist will involve MC taking his helmet off, revealing a total dork.

Dangerous radiation with supernatural properties

Putting the craft in war.

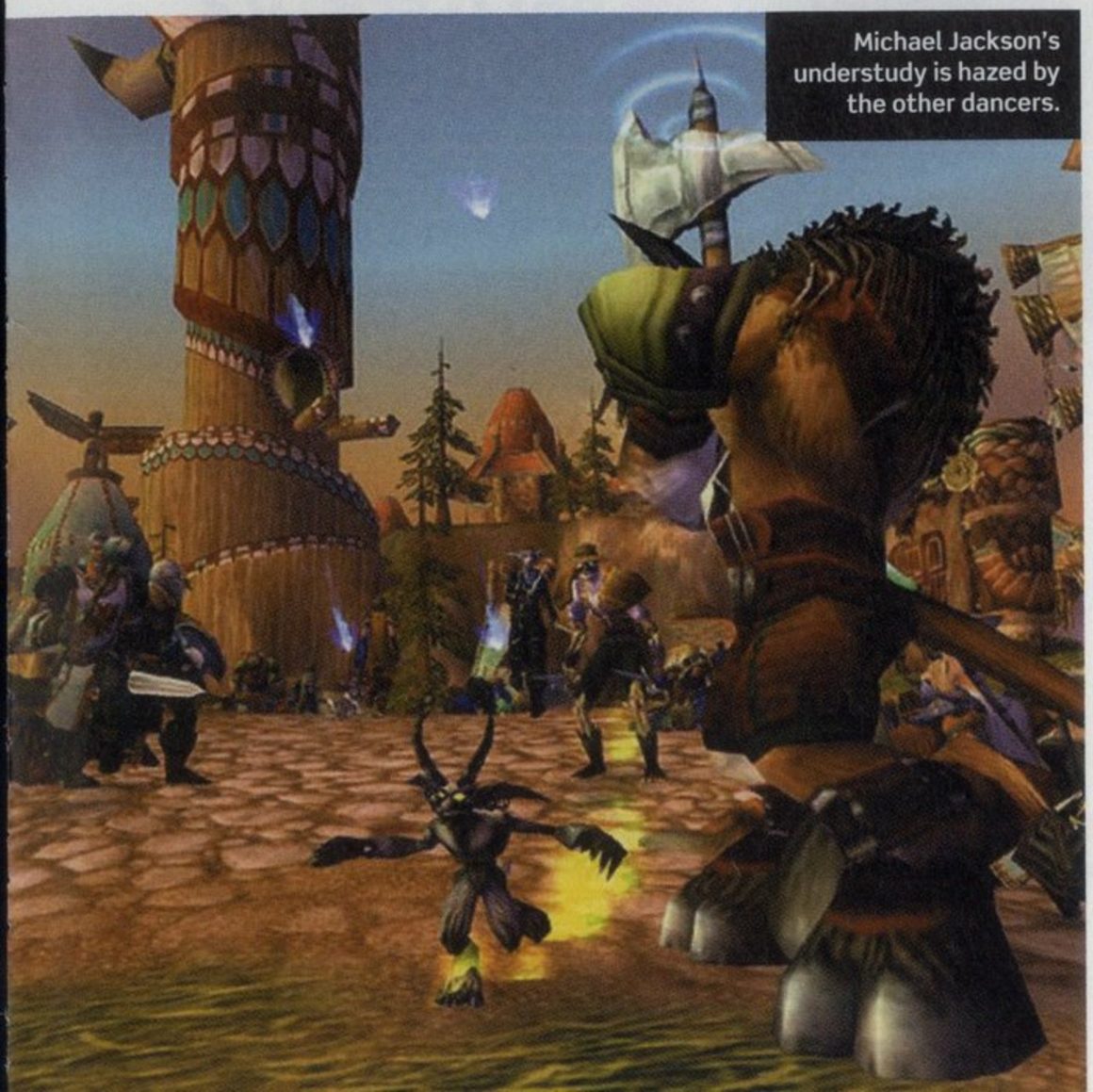
4 WORLD OF WARCRAFT WARGASM

After focusing for a long time on the way the individual and basic group gaming works, the dark cloud of war has finally descended over the world of *Warcraft*, with the beta testers battling it out on the Horde vs Alliance Race War server. It all began when members of the Alliance launched a daring attack on the Horde city, Brill. The Horde managed to fight off the invaders, repelling them back to Thelsamer, then launching their own counter-attack on the city. Following on from that, the game has played host to several massive battles.

Now the game's PvP side has finally shown its scarred, unlovely face, the cosy game that beta testers have experienced up until now is feeling rather more edgy.

Vivendi did confirm Australia will be joining the US and Korean launch date. One question remains, will the Koreans flood the servers at the same time most Australians will be trying to log on to play? Time will tell, er, some time soon.

Official ETA Very much a case of when it's done.
We say Sometime this summer…



Michael Jackson's understudy is hazed by the other dancers.

WIN A GAME

MY MOST WANTED

Register your excitement!

The Most Wanted chart is voted for by the PCGA readership. Every issue we compile your votes for the upcoming games you're most excited about and then hunt down the very latest news, screenshots and insider information we can uncover. On top of helping us help you, the voter with the best reason for their number #1 choice wins a game!

MY TOP FIVE MOST WANTED GAMES:

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

Name _____

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_____

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In 25 words, what's best about your #1 game?

_____

_____

_____

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Send your entries to:
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Or email pcga@derwenthoward.com.au
Or vote by web pwww.pcga.com.au

YOUR 10 MOST WANTED

5 SPLINTER CELL 3: CHAOS THEORY

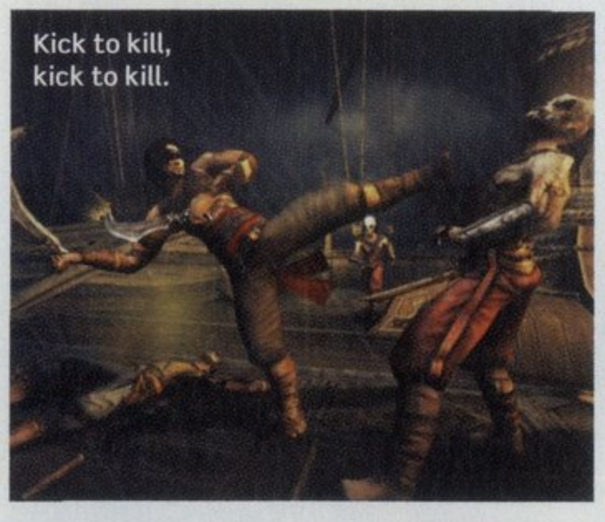
In most spy movies, the ability to sup neat booze without getting woozy is considered a major skill. We prefer *Splinter Cell 3*'s skillset, which makes Fisher all the more effective at his trade. The deadly agent is now ambidextrous. This small tweak makes aiming around corners far easier. In previous games, the game camera sat on his right shoulder, making aiming around a right corner difficult. Now, the weapon arm can be switched in-game.

And, as in the *Rainbow Six* games, doors will open incrementally, rather than swing all the way open which rather used to give the game away.

Official ETA November

We say Right on track

6 PRINCE OF PERSIA WITHIN SIGHT



Kick to kill, kick to kill.

Or, to put it more accurately *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*. The sequel to last year's beautiful, brilliant action game is looking like a genuine step forward, and new tidbits from Ubisoft have shown that the combo system is more varied than we'd imagined. Every move can branch off into four further attacks. That's enough to keep any defender guessing… Or bleeding.

We were even shown some footage of a new move - The Prince can plunge his knife into a huge bolt of cloth and ride it like our own Errol Flynn. A somewhat less grizzly way of showing off than every image of the game Ubisoft releases. Nothing internal about his warlike nature as yet.

Official ETA November

We say On target

7 MOH: PACIFIC ASSAULT DEATH CAM!

A brief snippet about in-game deaths. *Pacific Assault* has a brilliant method of making your death part of the overall action: you don't bite the big one instantly. Instead you lie there, the colour bleeds out the world and time slows down. The hope is that a medic will revive you, with a syringe full of 'special stuff', but there's also the strong possibility that a Japanese soldier will come along and gut you like a fish or stomp your head in instead. There's even the chance that a medic will get to you, raise the syringe to inject a glob of life-giving goodness, and take a bullet before he can save you. Ooh, nasty.

We also managed to wangle word of a possible new group-control setup, where you have a lot more control over the squad than was previously reported. But, like *Rome*'s use of winter, it'll be a late decision.

Official ETA November

We say Gone back for more polish

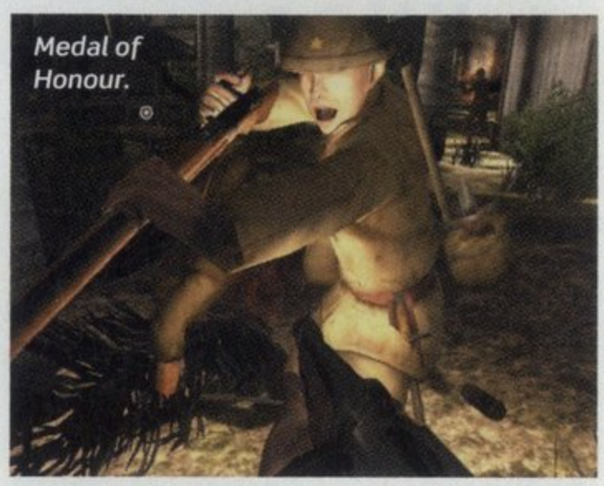
Nothing says stealth like head-mounted lamps.

8 BATTLEFIELD 2 ON YOUR OWNSOME

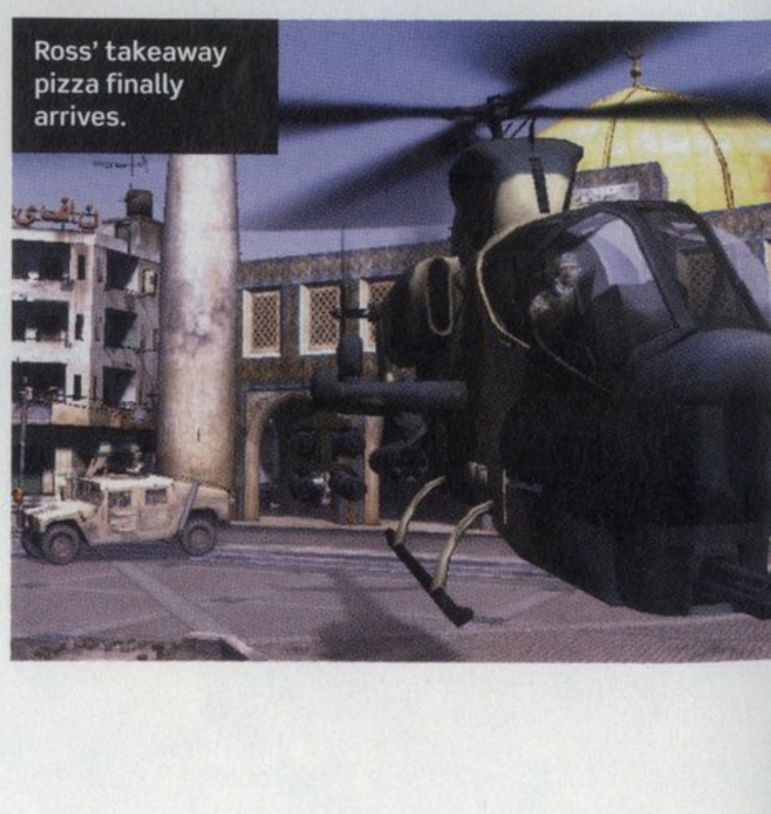
Multi-player war game *Battlefield 2* won't be out for another year at least, but that's never stopped developers

Shaving cream wouldn't have made this any more comfortable...

Every move can branch off into four other attacks...



Medal of Honour.



Ross' takeaway pizza finally arrives.

YOUR MOST WANTED CHART

One last look from the top...

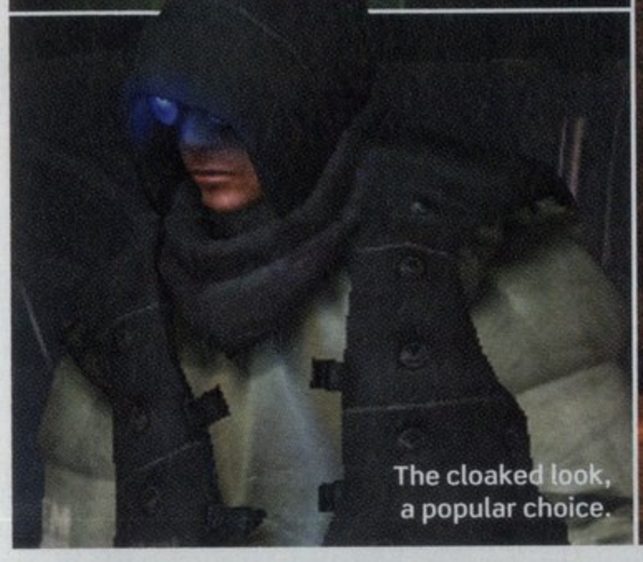
The voting here has been somewhat predictable of late, as everyone knows *Half-Life 2* has been around the next corner for a while now, and our review signifies the last time we'll see it here. Looking at how tightly bunched the other votes get, we're looking at a very even playing field in terms of what the public wants. Great for choice, bad for publishers trying to break even.

POSITION	GAME WANTED	VOTE SHARE	ETA
1 (1)	*Half-Life 2*	41%	Spring
2 (5)	*Stalker*	13%	2005
3 NEW	*Halo 2*	12%	2005
4 (4)	*World of Warcraft*	9%	Summer
5 RE	*Splinter Cell 3: Chaos Theory*	9%	November
6 (8)	*Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*	7%	September
7 (10)	*Medal of Honour: Pacific Assault*	4%	November
8 NEW	*Battlefield 2*	3%	2005
9 NEW	*F.E.A.R*	1%	2005
10 RE	*Black & White 2*	1%	2005
NEAR MISS	*GTA: San Andreas*	1%	2005

Dubya's finger slips while channel hopping to SkyNews.

News Eyewitness

No-one wants to play with me.



The cloaked look, a popular choice.

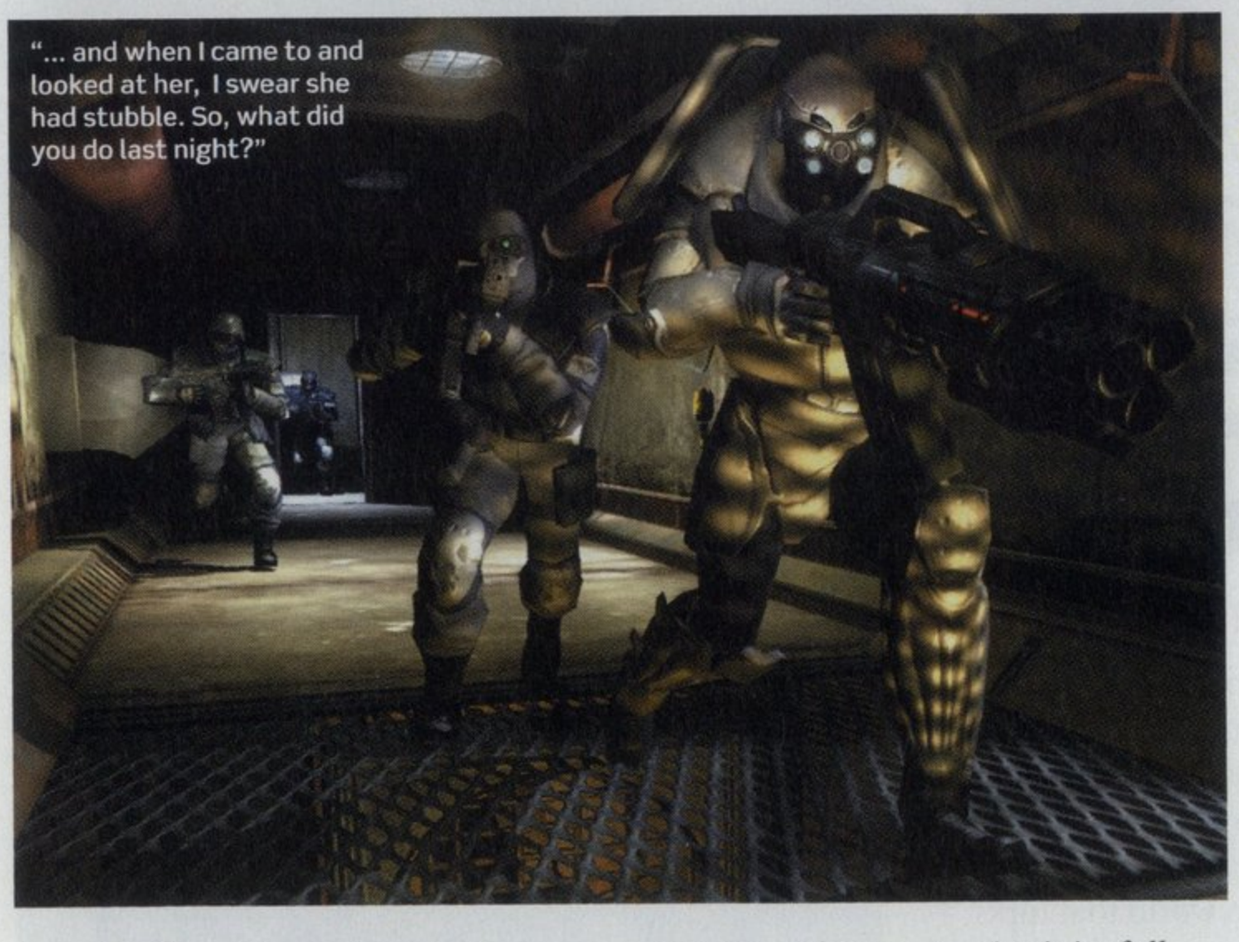
US Army target practice literally uses barn doors.

ONE TO WATCH

PARIAH

■ **Publisher** Atari ■ **Developer** Digital Extremes

Earth is a wasteland, ravaged by disease and destruction. And in the game, it also faces the possibility of being wiped clean of all life by a 50 megaton nuclear device. As burned-out medic, Jack Mason, you're stranded on Earth. Time to get un-stranded, clearly. This one comes from the developers of *Unreal Tournament 2004*. Let's see if they can handle a little plot with their FPS action.



"... and when I came to and looked at her, I swear she had stubble. So, what did you do last night?"

10 BLACK & WHITE 2 TRIP THE LIGHT FAN-FANFIC

The legions of fans of Lionhead's idiosyncratic god-game have had a long wait now, and they're champing at the sequel bit. So much so that Lionhead had to create a special Fan Fiction folder on their forums to give the fans an outlet for their fevered imaginations. Not to be hurtful, but 'outlet' is an appropriate word. Fan Fiction has never broken any records for the quality of its prose. Still, if you're new to the world of fan created fiction, this is as good a place as any to start. Go to **tinyurl.com/59wus** for more.

Official ETA 2005

We say It's a way off, yet

I love to mooove it, moooove it, moove it.

from issuing statements about changes. They *are* going to include a single-player mode after all. It makes sense, as it can't harm the game to open up to all the non PvP players out there. Although you really aren't playing a *Battlefield* game if you're not typing insults to your vanquished foe.

Official ETA 2005

We say And late 2005 at that.

9 F.E.A.R NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF?

F.E.A.R. is Monolith's take on the scary FPS, slotting nicely into the void left by the venerable *System Shock 2* all those years ago. *First Encounter Assault and Recon*, to give it its full name, proves that little girls are every bit as psychologically scary as clowns.

Your elite team is sent in to crack a paramilitary organisation that has taken over the HQ of a big corporation. Bad move on their part, as they've inadvertantly unleashed a terrifyingly powerful psychic weapon. The girl in *F.E.A.R.* disappears and reappears, glitching the screen with static before she tears her enemies limb from limb. This beautifully visceral combat is an impressive sight. *F.E.A.R.* is definitely one to watch. From behind the sofa.

Official ETA 2005

We say Can't say fairer than that

Prince Kong stages a military coup.

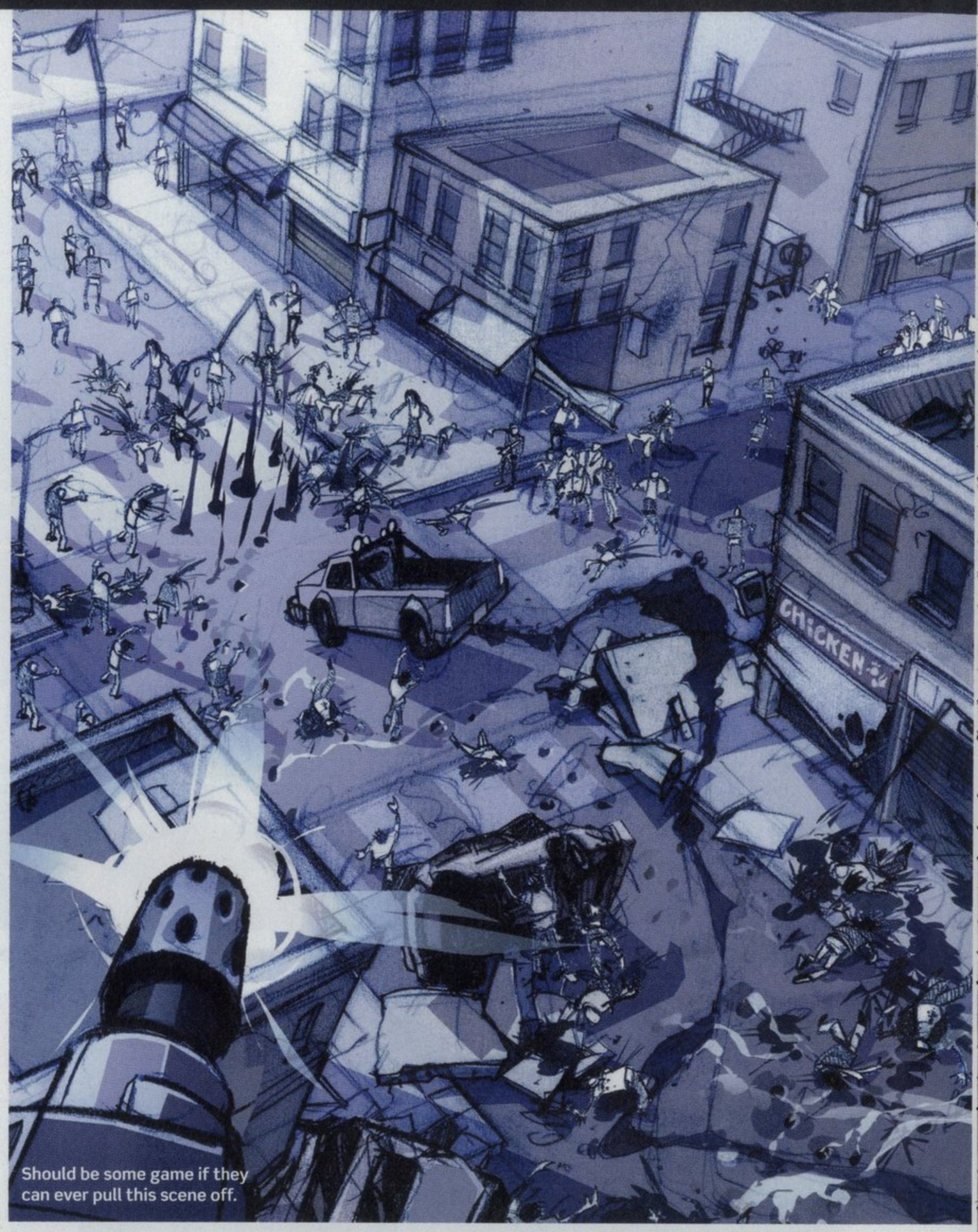
Eyewitness News

City of the Dead

New zombie game lurches in

George A. Romero, the surrogate granddaddy of the zombie genre, will be writing the story to 'The Goriest Game Ever Made', according to Asylum Studios, the home of ex-id star American McGee. While McGee will be handling development, he let slip on his blog that Asylum is searching for publishing partners for *City of the Dead*, a new Romero 'concept'. "George Romero is the undisputed father of zombie gore cinema," says McGee. "Franchises like *Resident Evil* and even *Doom* take many of their style cues and world rules from the early Romero films. Needless to say, there are few things more creepy than dead people who won't *die*."

Asylum reckon: "City of the Dead aims to surpass [previous zombie games] by evolving the gameplay in a new and better direction." Concept designs suggest a *GTA*-style city and action scenes where players mow down hundreds of shufflers with high-powered weaponry. A four-player squad element is also on the cards plus paramilitary vehicles, such as the jeep with chain-gun accessories.



Should be some game if they can ever pull this scene off.

README
Publisher Still looking
Developer Asylum
ETA Late 2005

SAY *WHAT*?
The month in tongues

John Carmack
"It was tempting to take a stand and say that our products were never going to use any advanced Creative /3dlabs products... but that would only have hurt the users."
The id founder's high-tech wrath is aimed at Creative, who patented an algorithm Carmack used in Doom 3.

Derek Smart
"This is something I am seriously considering, given that it looks like Interplay have started off-loading properties (starting with *Fallout* 3). *Developer Derek Smart sets himself up for a huge fall by telling everyone he's trying to acquire Interplay's classic Freespace* space combat licence.

Constantine

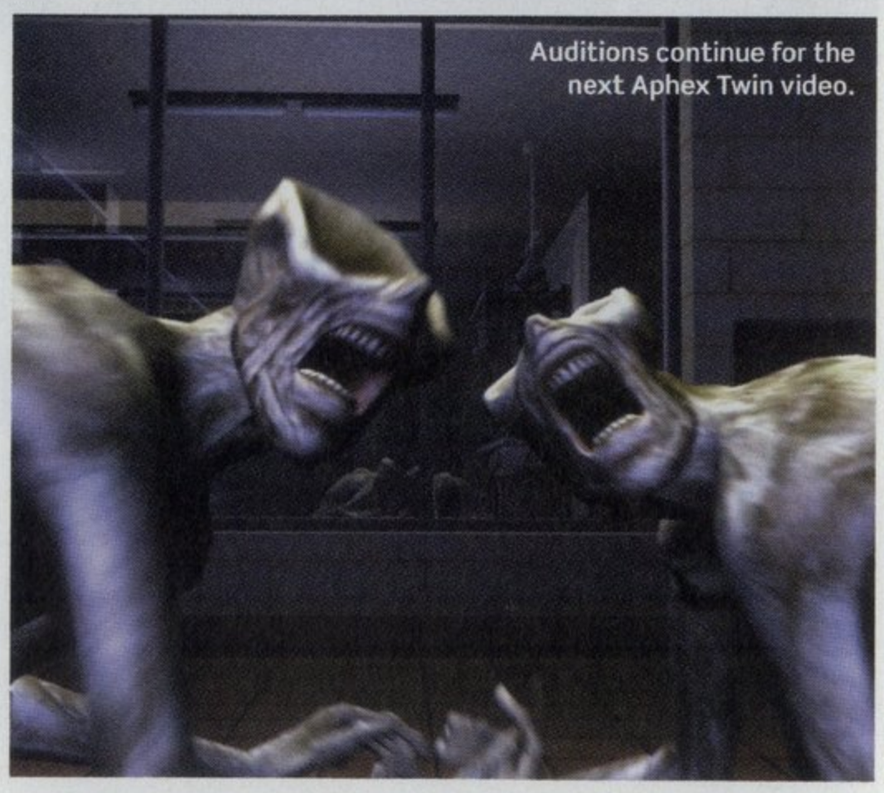
John, rather than the Great

Demons are everywhere nowadays. But luckily for us, you can't throw a crucifix without hitting a paranormal hunter, like the one and only John Constantine.

Constantine is based on the forthcoming movie adaptation (starring Keanu Reeves) of the comic Hellblazer. It's a third-person demon-hunting game, with an out-of-this-world arsenal.

There's a shotgun that fires buckshot in the shape of a cross, a bug in a box that confuses demons, and a nailgun firing nails from the crosses of crucified men. John also has his supernatural powers.

He needs it all, hunting for clues to explain the mysterious suicide of his partner's twin sister in the demon world that lurks just beneath Los Angeles. We'll have some garlic with our stake, please.


Auditions continue for the next Aphex Twin video.

README
Publisher SCi Games
Developer Bits Studios
ETA Feb 2005

gobbets

Hold on› Just when you've sussed the GBA and N-Gage, another way for you to annoy everyone on the train appears. The Tapwave Zodiac is a PDA that's been souped-up Covent Garden style. It'll play classics like Duke Nukem and Doom, and there are new games being developed. Oh, and it does Solitaire too if you're stuck in the Quiet Coach. Check out: www.tapwave.com

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Devil's Advocate

When will developers receive the credit they deserve?

TIM EDWARDS
is the happiest man you've never met. He's still waiting for Blizzard to implement the /hug command in *World of Warcraft*. We all plan to PK him for it.

Discuss this article at
http://forums.derwenthoward.com.au/viewforum.php?f=5

Creating videogames is a collaborative process. It involves a huge number of specialists, working flat-out for years. Crafting a game from original vision to final code is expensive and draining. It's *hard*.

Yet we know very little about the men and women who do this. Few game designers can be considered celebrities; equally few have a recognisable name or style. Absolutely none have billboard power: the ability to pull in punters by simply attaching their name to a project. We have no Spielbergs, Tarentinos or Coppolas.

All we have are brands. Ever since EA Sports proved that a snappy tag-line with an obnoxious logo could implant itself in a gamer's brain. Now promotion centres around a brand, over a game or name. Think *Tom Clancy's Chinny Recon*, *Medal of Honour: Private Party* or *Star Wars: Bantha Herder*. Some publishers have taken it to extremes: Rockstar started plastering fly-posters bearing their logo throughout inner cities last year. No games were advertised. No *Max Payne*. No *GTA*. Just the Rockstar 'R'.

This is a hugely dangerous development. Brands are associated with products, *objects*, not important pieces of personal creation. There is no artistic endeavour in a can of Coca Cola. There is no artistic endeavour in a pair of Nike trainers. These are objects, not modes. Covetable, yes. A means of expression, no.

Why are publishers willing to sacrifice the legitimacy of their creations, and recognition for their creator's achievement, for brand awareness? Here's a story. Once upon a time, at the dawn of this industry, a group of four hyper-talented programmers and designers were sick of their individual talent being ignored. As a group, they jumped ship, setting up their own company, producing games for their former employers' console, agreeing as a principle that the creators, not the suits, would take any credit for their achievements. The company they left was Atari – the company they formed was called Activision.

The lesson was quickly learned. If you give creators any sense of power, they tend to want to do dangerously creative things. Set up companies; imagine fresh ideas, that kind of thing. It's a telling tale for an industry that has become so coached in building on franchises, refining last year's enormo-seller into a Golgothic, till-bursting monster. Publishers need top talent – but, to satisfy the shareholders, they need those people to be co-operative and pliant. Best keep them behind closed doors, closeted from praise, recognition and opportunity.

We're about to find out if this situation can continue thanks to football management games of all things. Last year, Sports Interactive announced that they're no longer going to create games for Eidos, their previous publisher. Instead, they've signed to Sega, and are set to craft a new footy game: *Football Manager*. Meanwhile, the 'brand' that SI created – *Championship Manager* – has been left with Eidos. That publisher has formed its own development team, and is crafting its own sequel to *Champ Man*, ready to capitalise on that name that equates to truly huge sales over in Europe.

It doesn't matter who wins or who loses in this battle. What's important is that the process has started – the re-emergence of the celebrity development team.

Like Sam, *Splinter Cell*'s developers are little-known and hard to detect.

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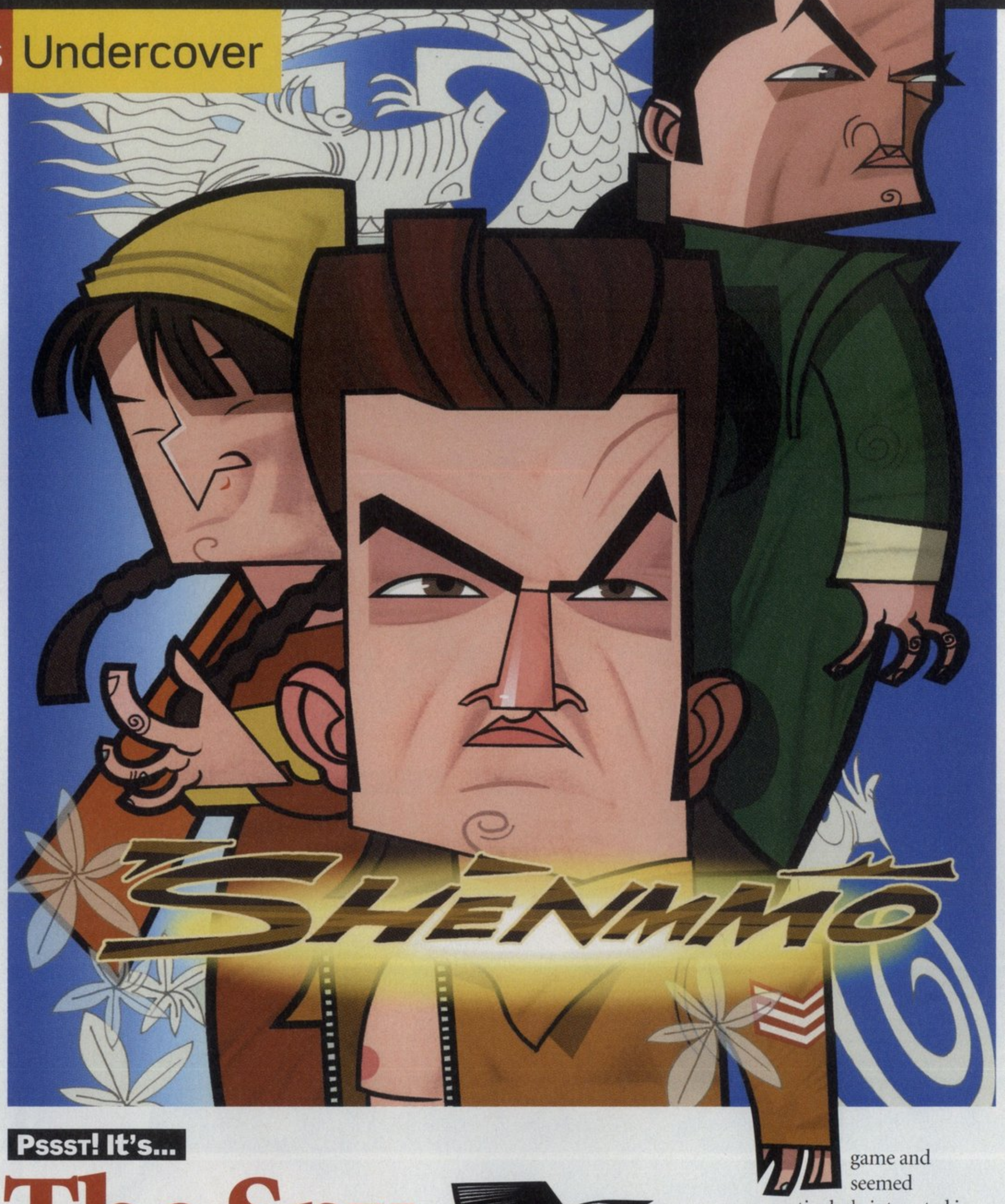

Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

PSSST! It's...

The Spy

Hush Puppie to Master Cobbler. One of our shoehorns is missing. Proceed with mission Cuban Heel.

Where is The Spy? He WAS right behind you... Creepy eh?

Phrasebooks and hand gestures can only get you so far when faced with the task of penetrating Hong Kong's underground. But after a few minor scrapes and some unfortunate menu mishaps, The Spy emerged from his Far East mission with the goods: cast-iron evidence that *Shenmue* creator, Yu Suzuki, is busying himself with an online PC version of his adventure title, a series which was previously announced as a 16 chapter (count 'em) singleplayer yarn. But with only two chapters in the bag, Suzuki has apparently caught the MMORPG bug and is sketching out an online world based on '80s Hong Kong – albeit with thousands of players starring as militants and martial artists. When the chops start flying they'll do so in realtime with movie-style fight sequences, similar to the kind of action we've been promised in *The Matrix Online*. Sega will be publishing the game in the Far East but with the Europe currently being hailed as the big untapped MMORPG market, The Spy believes it could hit shelves in 2005. The Spy will keep his phrasebook handy just in case.

The Spy's listening devices planted in and around id Software have successfully detected talk of an expansion pack for *Doom 3*. John Carmack not only let slip that add-ons are on their way, but also revealed that id are working on a totally new game that will probably be a horror shooter (surprise) but will not be a follow up to any of their existing series. Will the man never rest?

The Spy also overheard talk of how *Quake IV* is unfolding under the hands of affiliate developers Raven. There's talk that the game will have a single player focus, and continue the tale of the Stroggos conflict from *Quake II*. Though the Spy suspects id are going to ensure the same sort of arena-play options from the last *Quake* are in place.

Sojourning to British Isles, The Spy has learned that former *Tomb Raider* designer Toby Gard has been welcomed back into the warm bosom of Eidos. Literally. He's slipped back into a Crystal Dynamics team working on the next Lara Croft adventure.

On his day off, The Spy occasionally enjoys posing as a tour guide in the country's finest museums, and it was in this guise that The Spy found himself showing EA fact-finders around Bovington Tank museum. The EA scouts were apparently researching a new *Medal Of Honour* game and seemed particularly interested in the Battle Of The Bulge exhibits. Period photographs were scanned, vehicles snapped, archives videotaped and sound recordings copied. The EA personnel were especially curious about the US Sherman tanks and the German Tiger tanks which featured prominently in the 1944 battle in the Ardennes. A brief glance at the EA itinerary further revealed plans to visit museums in France, Belgium and Cairo, Egypt.

And there's more sequel talk emerging from LucasArts centring around *Indiana Jones* and a new *Daggerfall* RPG in the offing from Bethesda.

Spy out.

SHADE

Wrath Of Angels

Things are never as they first seem

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Eyewitness News

COMMENT

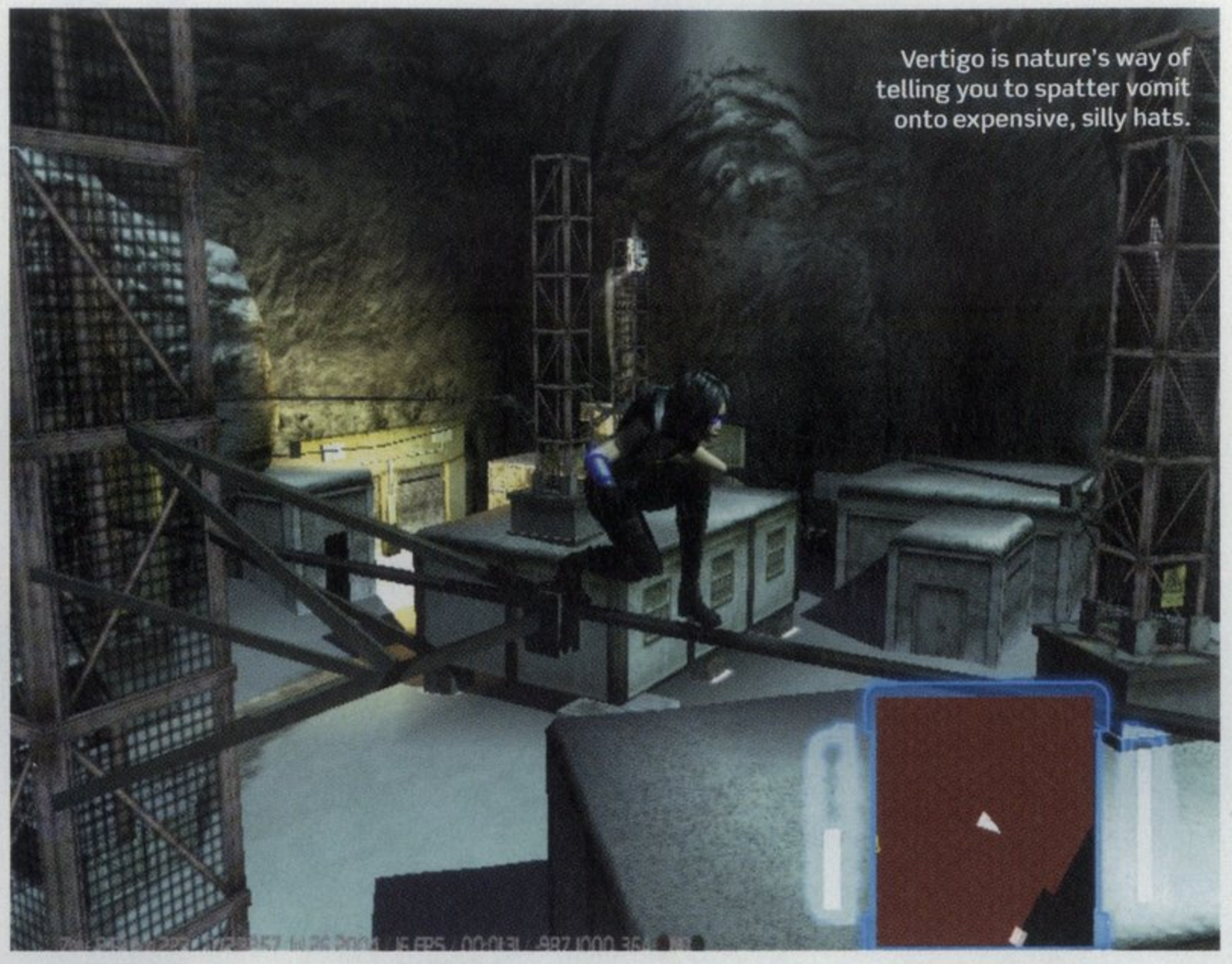
The weight of expectation

Not many games have split the gaming community wider than *Doom 3*. Whoever we speak to, wherever we go, the question "what did you think of *Doom 3*?" follows us around. It's an endless source of conversation. For the believers, it's a uncompromising slice of action-horror, as disturbing as it is technically peerless. Few can boast they left *Doom 3* in the same emotional state as they began the game. But for some, that doesn't matter. "Why do you have to switch to the flashlight whenever you enter a room?" they say. "And before you answer, explain why the legions of Hell have taken to hiding in wardrobes? And why on Mars did the advanced humans who built this space station leave barrels of explosive gloop lying around?"

There's no counter to either argument. They are both totally valid – yes, this is the most technically advanced game ever. Yes, it's nerve-wracking. Yes, every second corner hides yet another imp. And yes, there are design conceits running through the entire game that appear rudimentary when weighed against our own imaginations.

This is the problem.

A game can only be judged on what it does, not what it doesn't. id couldn't craft the game that was in your imagination. They created the game that was in theirs. It's time for all gamers to see the simple good in that. The whole reason we awaited *Doom 3* so eagerly is that id did their own thing in the first place. If you stop giving them that license, gaming as an art-form dies.



Stolen

Gaming's first half-inch heroine

Apare a thought for poor Anya. The rubber-limbed lead from Blue 52's third-person steal-'em-up was going to be the girl that broke the stealth genre long before Sam Fisher could contemplate stubble. Four years on and *Stolen* is at last more than just a tech demo having been picked up by Hip Interactive.

Stolen is built on Blue 52's in-house technology. An engine that's painting a near-future city littered with juicy corporations just crying to have their security systems breached. Perfect fodder for Anya, the cat-burgling pussycat with the moves of a Russian gymnast and the kind of gadgetry that has Sam Fisher daydreaming between neck breaks. Anya won't be equipped for bone snapping confrontations though. The developers are laying the emphasis on evasion as our heroine traverses walls and springs between shadows to avoid the rough stuff. Though she does pack neutraliser darts and a handy right hook for emergencies.

Blue 52 demonstrated the game's potential in a showpiece level that pays homage to *Mission Impossible*, with Anya suspended above dozens of motion alarms, highlights the potential. The only doubt can be whether the PC version can wriggle free of its console origins.

README

Publisher Hip Interactive
Developer Blue52
ETA March 2005

GfK THE PC TOP 10 CHART

NO SURPRISES...

What did we allude to last month in our screenshot caption? Sure enough, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* has fled the scene as *the Sims 2* assumes it's pre-ordained position at the top of the chart. It may have been pre-ordained via pre-order alone, but you can't say EA didn't put in the effort. TV ads running during shows like *Australian Idol* reach a huge audience. Plus, *the Sims* keeps selling... EA are raking it in.

"On never mind my sprog now, we're making loads of cash! Let's party!"

POSITION	GAME	PUBLISHER
1 (NE)	*The Sims 2*	EA
2 (NE)	*Call of Duty: United Offensive*	Activision
3 (1)	*The Sims: Deluxe*	EA
4 (3)	*The Sims: Unleashed*	EA
5 (NE)	*Doom 3*	Activision
6 (4)	*The Sims: Superstar*	EA
7 (NE)	*Final Fantasy XI*	*Ubisoft*
8 (8)	*The Sims: Vaacation*	EA
9 (10)	*The Sims: Hot Date*	EA
10 (NE)	*The Sims: House Party*	EA

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THIS IS HARDCORE

The valley of the lost genres

Dan 'the Gaffer' Toose

THIS IS...

STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

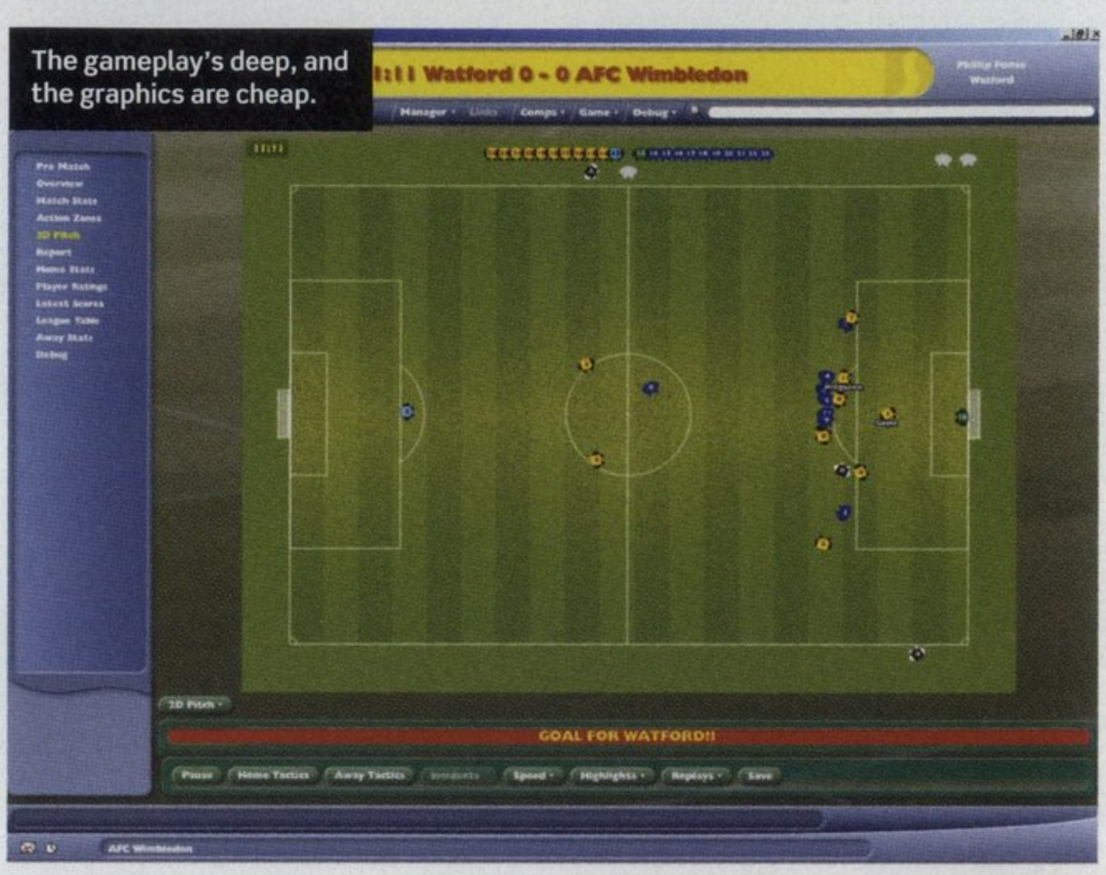
A battle is about to take place that will draw less attention than a news report of a bomb going off somewhere in the Middle-East. Eidos, Sega and EA Sports are all set to try and create the ultimate soccer management simulation. The three titles in question are *Championship Manager 2005*, *Football Manager 2005* and *Total Club Manager 2005* from the aforementioned publishers respectively.

Unless you're following this niche genre carefully, it's not hard to be confused about who does what. Sports Interactive, developers of the *Championship Manager* series have gone over to Sega to create *Football Manager 2005*. It's shown how important name recognition is to the industry, because Eidos are continuing the *CM* series without Sports Interactive. It'll serve as a great indication as to just what's in a name, and if gamers will look for the *CM* developer or the *CM* series. Read this month's Devil's Advocate rant.

It's in the game...

Though I'll be making the call come review time, EA's *Total Club Manager 2005* is quite possibly the one to watch. *CM4* was bug-ridden and slow, and EA have been improving the *TCM* franchise on an annual basis.

Boasting the 3D *FIFA* engine, *TCM* is the only game of series with some genuine eye-candy, and integrates with *FIFA 2005* for the full football experience. It'll be a tight three-way battle.



The gameplay's deep, and the graphics are cheap.

Transfer ideas with Dan at
dan@derwenthoward.com.au

Tim 'Flak-Magnet' Stone

THIS IS...

SIMULATION

There's an empty seat in the flight sim mess this evening. Aspect Simulations' WWI work-in-progress *Knights Over Europe*, has managed to wrap itself around a tree before ever catching a whiff of combat.

Difficulties with publishers Destineer apparently caused the prang and early reports indicate that nothing at all will be salvaged from the wreck. Very sad.

Years of work wasted.

Ballpark figure

On a more uplifting note, the demise of Papyrus Design Group could well turn out to be a blessing in disguise for lovers of rigorously realistic PC motosport.

Filthy-rich Boston Red Sox owner John W Henry has teamed up with Papy co-founder Dave Kaemmer to buy back source code from Vivendi and assemble a new design team.

Their ambitious plan is to create a flexible yet fabulously faithful race engine which can then be used to power a series of hardcore auto sims.

Slippage is not something we usually applaud in PCGA but in the particular case of *Silent Hunter III*, recently delayed until the early part of next year, some show of appreciation is definitely warranted.

Responding to the constant whinging of a justifiably concerned community, Ubisoft's Romanian team have put back the release date to allow for work on an *Aces of the Deep*-style dynamic campaign. Bravo!

Tally-Ho the Timbo at
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

Jere 'Jumpin' Lawrence

THIS IS...

ONLINE

Now you too can attempt to make the "Kessel Run" in 12 parsecs because as you read this the *Star Wars Galaxies* expansion, *Jump to Lightspeed*, should be available. Adding spacecraft to the game, players will be able to pilot a vast number of ships from X-wing fighters to Corellian class freighters (i.e. Millenium Falcon). The action takes place in over ten distinct sectors of space but so far LucasArts have only released information about Naboo, Tatooine, Corellian, Yavin and Dathomir. No doubt the other five sectors veiled in secrecy will be places we've seen in other games and the films.

As MMO battles go, that's massive.

Earning your wings is however going to be a little different because piloting isn't a conventional skill that can be raised through use or experience. Instead players will have to embark on story-driven missions to advance the skill. Vehicle combat is also being addressed in a very different manner for an MMORPG and will mix actual real-time components that focus more on a player's twitch skill then how big their stats.

Combing cats?

The *Dark Age of Camelot* player community is all abuzz after the announcement of a major expansion, *Catacombs* that promises to completely revamp the graphics engine, add new classes and of course a whole mess of dungeons to explore. *DAoC: Catacombs* should arrive before year's end.

Hunt at night? Contact Mark at
jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

Craig 'Safety's off' Pearson

THIS IS...

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

EA's big boot of copyright gave the makers of a *Doom 3* mod a right kick in the intellectual properties this month. The mod, *System Shock 2: Rebooted*, was to be an update of the classic *System Shock 2* using the *Doom 3* engine, but before you can say "wereservetherightto" EA's legal machine stepped in.

The letter, from Steve Bene, Esq stated: "We also ask that you the webmaster take action to prevent this type of copyright infringement on your server again. It not only displays lack of respect from you but from your company, Digitally Evolved, as well. We hope that you make the right decision as to what will happen to the offenders." The full letter can be read at: **rebooted.purkaia.net/dead_letter**

So the mod is now named *Sapphire Scar*, and will have nothing to do with *System Shock 2*, instead following a newly created storyline. Here's betting it involves scary monkeys, zombies and a complex inventory.

Cried off

Just when it looked like the *Far Cry* community was about to explode with apoplectic rage, Crytec finally released the SDK for users (on the discs). The modders will finally be able to import models and fool around with a new chunk of source code and better mod tools. See **www.crymod.com** for more.

Come mod with Craig at
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

James 'Alley cat' Cottee

THIS IS...

ODDBALL

There's nothing like an election year to get the Arts in a flurry. "Artists" see two things in the government: free money, and an endless source of material for their trite morality plays. The local election may already be in the bag, but the yanks still have some time, so some patriotic types have whipped a chance to showcase the more gallant side of John Kerry. *Kuma\War*'s stated goal is to rip scenarios straight from the headlines and deliver accurate simulations to gamers in a timely fashion. To this end, they've re-created Swift Boat PCF-94, its loyal crew, and its dashing captain: Lieutenant John Kerry.

Spilling claret

Yes, the year is 1969, and you get to re-live the actions that won Botox-Face his medals! Sounds like a re-hash of that old simulator "Gunboat," doesn't it? But where it really gets interesting is when you see what Kuma Reality Games used as source material: "The situation follows Kerry's account of events." Thus we can expect to earn Purple Hearts from enemy fire, not self-inflicted wounds. You'll be able to spend Christmas Eve '68 over the border in Cambodia, despite 200-odd accounts to the contrary. When you step ashore and slaughter peasant livestock, it will be part of a legitimate operation to starve the VC. Kerry will also be 10 feet tall, be able to soak up hundreds of bullets, and shoot laser beams from his eyes.
But why take his word for it? Go download the mission pack now!
www.kumawar.com

Embrace the eldritch Contact JC at
jcottee@derwenthoward.com.au

THIS IS...

RPG/ADVENTURE

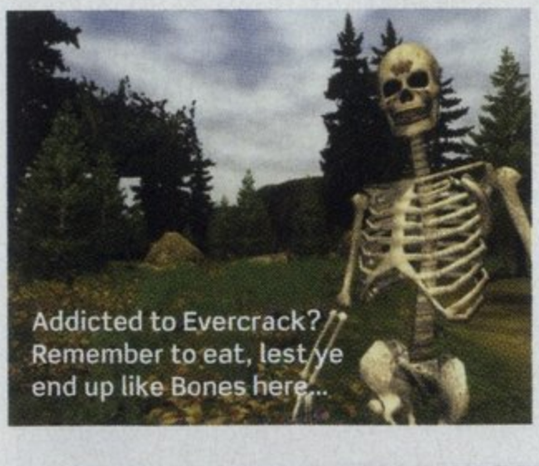
Having been addicted all over again during the *EverQuest 2* beta test, we've discovered that there is so much to do, watch, investigate and appreciate, that you can happily play for hours on end without so much as uttering a single word to a fellow adventurer. Whilst grouping makes it all the more fun, solo play is now infinitely more viable in this highly anticipated sequel.

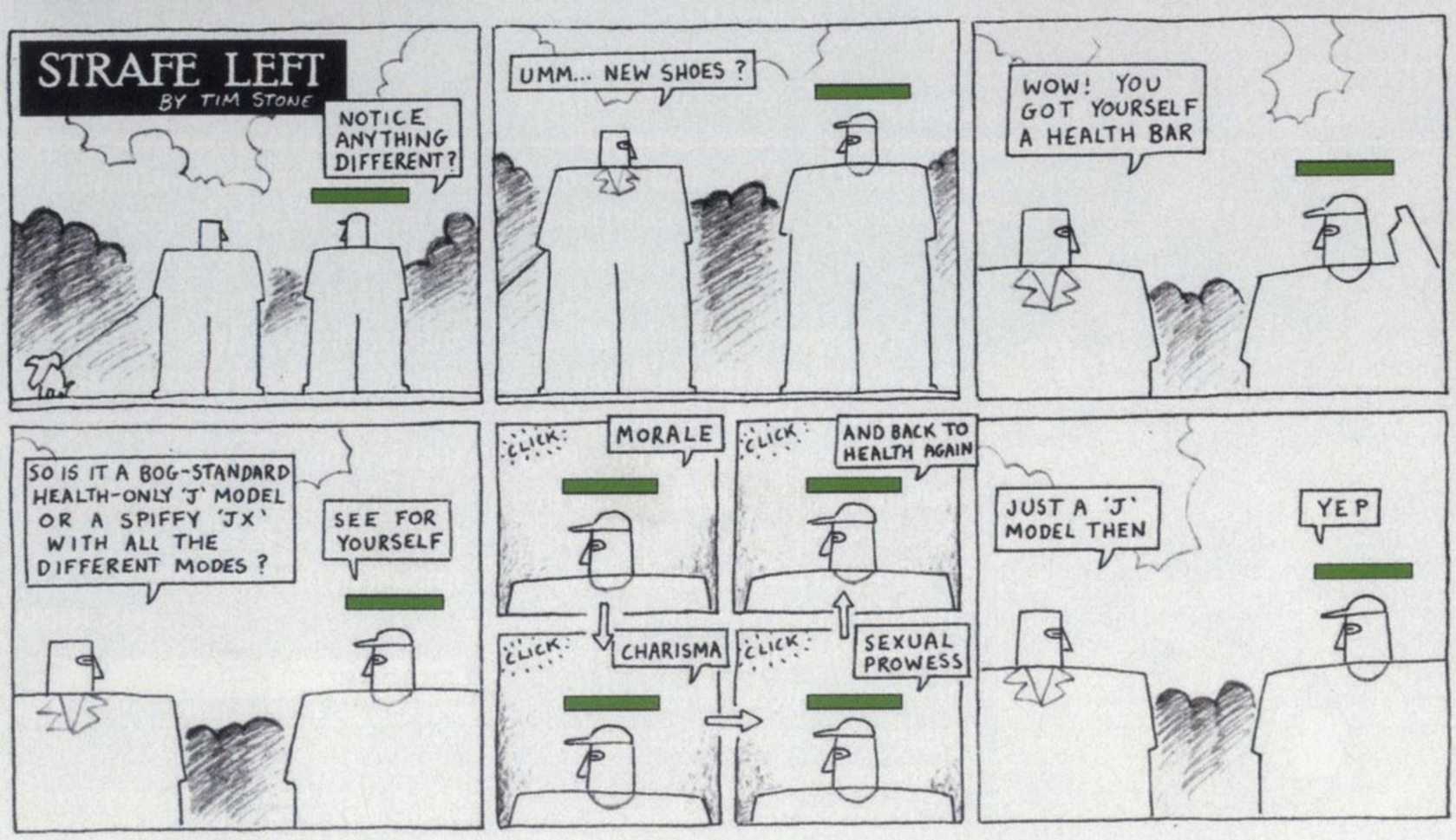
EverQuest 2 has big shoes to fill, replacing its bigger brother we affectionately know as EverCrack. But from our experiences in the Oakmyst Forest, Willow Wood, Antonica, and other fantastic locations in *EverQuest 2*, this is a game that is going to easily command legions of gamers with Borg-like ease.

With a sublimely easy and intuitive interface, the addition of heroic opportunities in combat (where you combo abilities and spells to perform super attacks), an immense series of intertwining quests, and graphics to die for, *EverQuest 2* is very much on the right track. But it faces stiff competition in the form of Blizzard's World of WarCraft, another MMORPG that has been passing with flying colours in its beta testing. If the online world is set for an epic showdown, it will be between these two games, and we dare say they'll finally bring MMORPGs well into the mainstream.

Eliot 'Elfish' Fish

Beard in a tangle? Contact Ross at
eliotf@derwenthoward.com.au





For those bored with board games...

Axis & Allies

RELEASE NOVEMBER

Armour units can cause infantry to rout, alongside their unchanging ability to blow stuff up.

Terrain confers some advantages, but a few trees won't hold off a sustained assault.

Capturing a town gives you a strong base in which to re-arm.

If ants had guns, this is how your patio would look.

THE PITCH

Bringing a brilliant boardgame to life in a more visceral, virtual PC-gaming format.

It's a brave publisher who enters this market expecting not to be a casualty. That is of course unless you can do WWII with a difference… Like say tapping into the huge existing audience of one of the most popular war-based board games in the world.

Axis & Allies isn't really a household name, but it boasts a global fan base that will soon be able to indulge in Larry Harris's classic '5 nations' WWII game, without the need for company.

Of course, the folks at the Games Workshop how 'easy' it is to convert a board game to PC. More than a few duds tried and failed before *Dawn of War* landed. *Axis & Allies* has always been about building an empire, and like in *Rome: Total War*, the game takes place on both a world map and with a colourful 3D combat engine that brings some action to the fore.

Though there's much of the usual RTS fittings, the key to victory lies more in acting with the right type(s) of unit at the right place rather than speedy micromanagement.

Timegate have fashioned a clever, simplistic supply line system that is illustrated as a dynamic bordered zone, as in *Rise of Nations*. This does away with the need for supply unts that are annoyingly easy to kill, even when guarded. This is not realistic in a sim sense, but it does make the tide of battle flow back and forth correctly. The main factor behind this is that all units heal or repair when within supply range, making runs deep into enemy territory genuinely dangerous – without the tedium of having to use units that need an escort.

Does away with the need for supply units

There's no exhaustive lists of authentic WWII hardware, nor much in the way of formations or stances to use the interface tactically, but this was not the mission statement. From our time with pre-release code, it appears Timegate have turned *Axis & Allies* into a RTS game that is different enough not to reek of formula, and satisfying to the senses. Review set to impact in the near future.

DAN TOOSE

README

Publisher Atari
Developer Timegate
Link www.atari.com/axisandallies/
Not just a lazy conversion of a boardgame to PC title, *A&A* is a truly polished product.

D-DAY

"London, Tuesday, June 6, 1944: Under command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France." -- first broadcast communiqué after the start of the Normandy Invasion

And so it begins....

NORMANDIE 1944 – La mémoire – 60ème ANNIVERSAIRE

Digital Jesters

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RTS enters an Orcward phase

The Lord of the Rings
The Battle for Middle-Earth

The village set itself on fire to take the fun out of it for the orcs.

ON THE CD More grizzly front-line eye candy awaits on this month's cover disc > Galleries

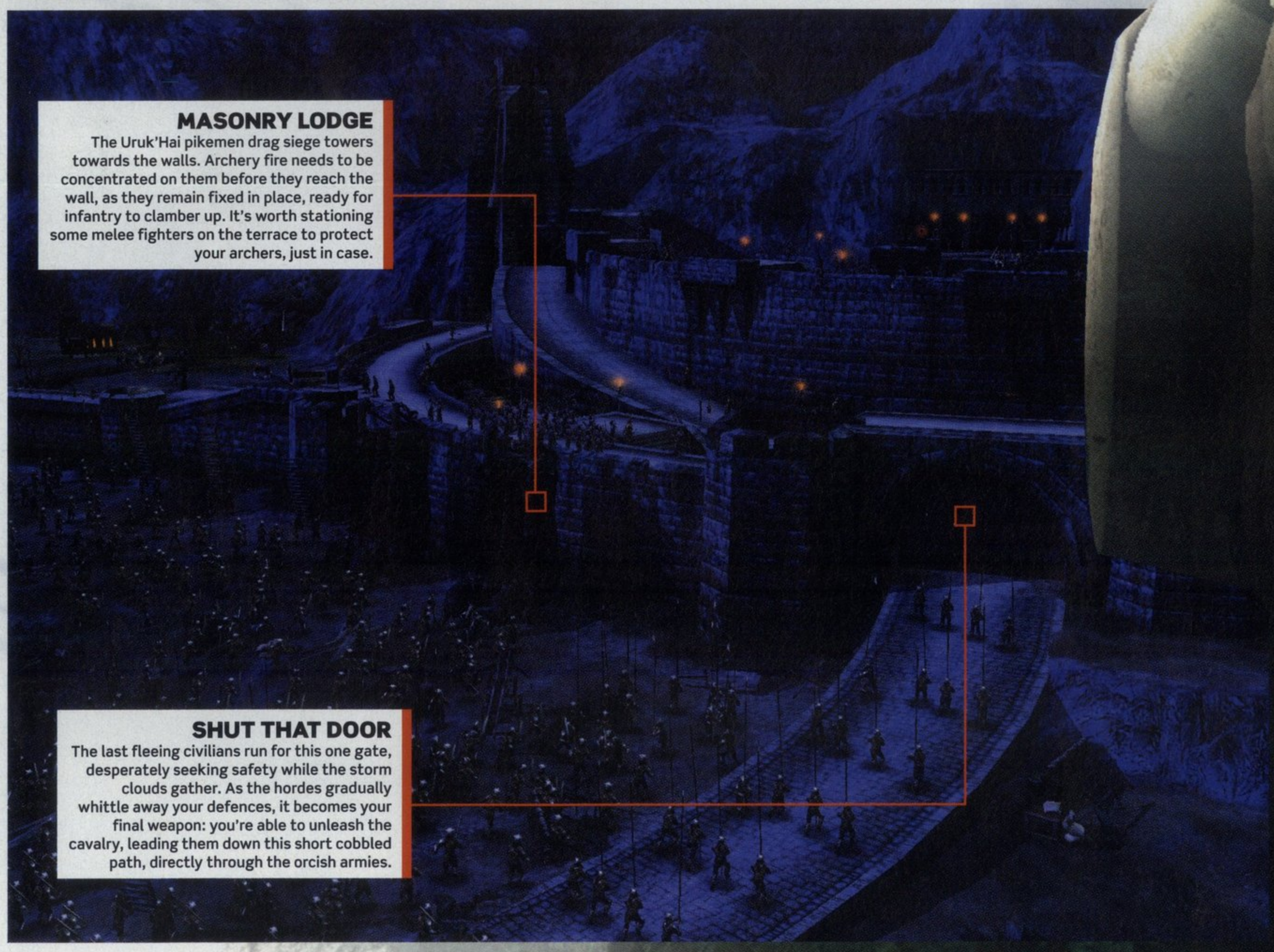
This is an action game, as opposed to a strategy game. That's the first realisation you make when confronted by *Battle for Middle-Earth*. The developers are the talent behind *C&C: Generals*. They have a reputation for furiously paced missions and heavily scripted, cinematic masterpieces that require quick reflexes and tank rushes.

THE PITCH
Gandalf and chums battle the dark hordes of Sauron. Fight the battles of the films, from either side.

The second realisation you make? That this could work. The scale of the situations it throws at you, the weight of numbers, the depth of scripting, the noise and chaos, it feels *big*.

Which brings us to Helm's Deep, nightfall, and more clues as to how the developers are translating the vast clashes of the Lord of the Rings saga into one-shot missions.

Your objective is to defend the line, hold out behind the stone fortifications until



MASONRY LODGE
The Uruk'Hai pikemen drag siege towers towards the walls. Archery fire needs to be concentrated on them before they reach the wall, as they remain fixed in place, ready for infantry to clamber up. It's worth stationing some melee fighters on the terrace to protect your archers, just in case.

SHUT THAT DOOR
The last fleeing civilians run for this one gate, desperately seeking safety while the storm clouds gather. As the hordes gradually whittle away your defences, it becomes your final weapon: you're able to unleash the cavalry, leading them down this short cobbled path, directly through the orcish armies.

An Oliphant never forgets (the brutal enslavement of its fellow creatures).

sunrise, when Gandalf will arrive at the head of the Rohirrim cavalry. The first ten minutes are almost serene, a case of fortifying the keep, placing archers on the Deeping Wall, distributing heroes in the towers, recruiting militia men from the wretched Rohan people. Then come war horns and the roar of a thousand Uruk'Hai, marching steadily into position. Just ahead, we see six innocent women and children desperate to reach the sanctuary of the main gates. Do you let them in? Of course you don't. That would spell doom for your entire army. You have no choice but to slam the doors in their pleading faces. Oh, don't be such a wuss.

Amid the chaos, game scientists will immediately notice just how easy it is to make decisions. Clicking the right buttons on a barracks or archery range results in a stream of soldiers. There's no hanging around, waiting for men to appear, there's no staring at a production bar as it creeps slowly along. Tech trees are kept purposefully simple. Nothing gets in the way of the violence.

Orc armies charge with raised siege ladders

And here it comes. With a vicious snarl, the orc armies charge the Deeping Wall, carrying raised siege ladders. Gripping the top rung, Uruk'Hai warriors, swords raised, jeer at the defenders.

For 15 minutes, our eyes don't leave the screen. There's barely time to blink, let alone think, as orcs scale ladders, cutting down our brave troops. And suicidal monsters charge the wall, Saruman's explosives strapped to their chests. Our mouse cursor darts around, targeting specific enemies, looking for those preparing to storm the walls. We're on the back foot throughout, struggling to control the carnage. Yes, it's an action game. And oh yes, it's big.

TIM EDWARDS

README

Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer In-house
Link www.eagames.comofficial lordoftherings
All our LotR fantasies brought to life.

NOW SHOWING ON THE SMALL SCREEN

Battle for Middle-Earth recreates skirmishes from throughout the trilogy

Mordor's assault on the Rohan settlements is touched upon in the Two Towers movie, but further explored in the forget-the-dialogue-let's-fight game.

The long trek through the Mines of Moria sees you fending off wave after wave of goblins. Let's hope the Balrog stays napping.

The final charge. As Frodo carries the ring towards Mount Doom, the fellowship leads a near suicidal assault upon the Black Gate.

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others pick up a couple of G-con™2s

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PlayStation 2

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It's the bomb

Counter-Strike Source

REVIEW NEXT ISSUE

Say goodbye to your sleep patterns. Stock up on fizzy caffeine and stimulants. Invest in a freezer and low maintenance, high calorie food. Take a week off work. Kiss your loved ones goodbye. Lock the doors and close your curtains. You need the time, the space and the supplies for one reason: *Counter-Strike: Source* is here and yes, it's everything we hoped for. Make preparations now. This is going to dominate your free playtime in exactly the same way the original mod sucked away entire days.

To bring you up to speed, *Counter-Strike: Source* is a direct translation of an ageing, yet brilliant, five-year old, *Half-Life*, teamplay mod.

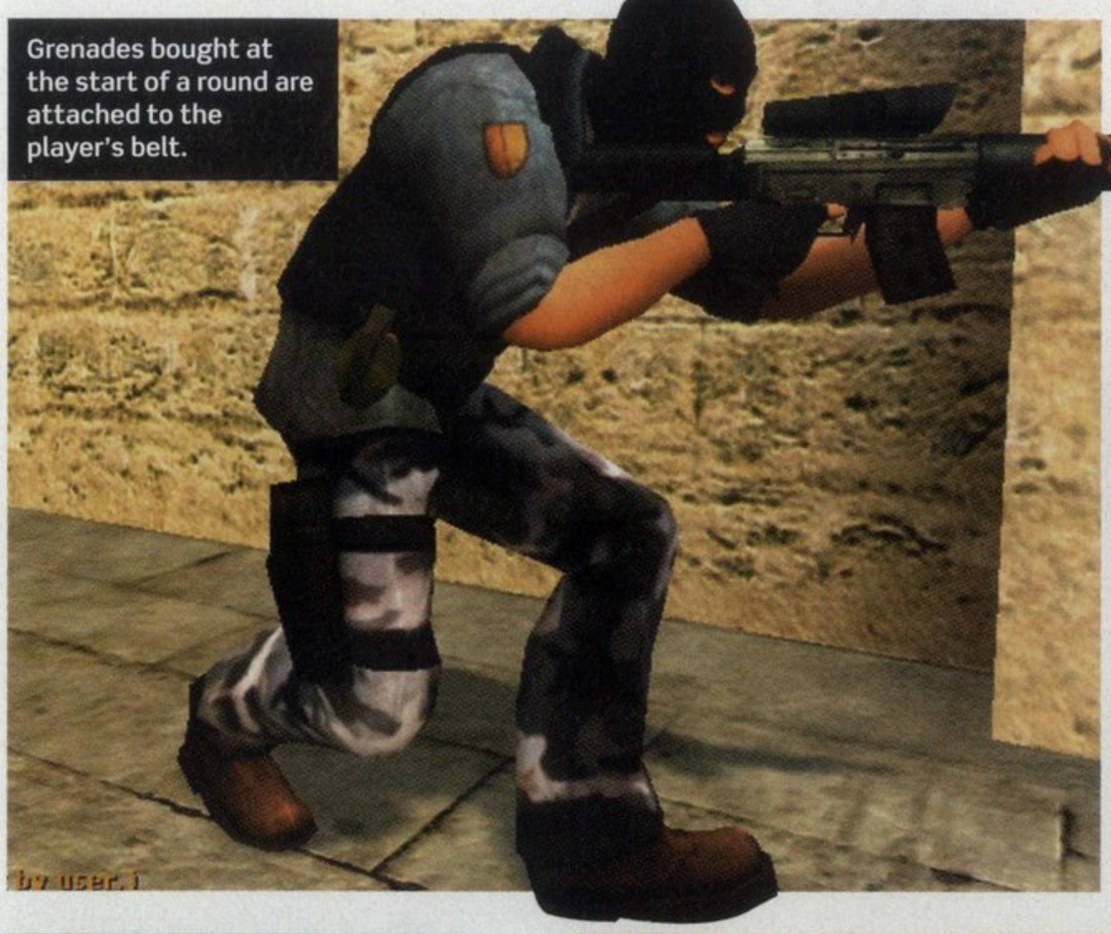
Teams of terrorists and counter-terrorists (CTs) face off across exotic, yet realistic terrains. Killing the opposition, planting bombs and winning rounds nets cold, hard currency, which is spent on new equipment. A new rifle, a sub-machinegun, maybe a Kevlar vest and matching helmet. Take down one of the team, and you're left to sit the round out, an invisible spectator.

It's a formula that *works*. There's a delicious rhythm to ▶

THE PITCH
The ultimate online shooter. Two teams, armed to the teeth, face-off all over the world.

ON THE DVD See *Counter-Strike: Source* in action in this issue's beautiful Bink movie file > Movies

COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE



Grenades bought at the start of a round are attached to the player's belt.

Stack a couple of bodies over the bomb, and watch them fly.

THE BOMBSITE FAQ

Will my computer run *CS: Source*? Most probably. Valve's minimum system requirements for the game is a 1.2GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM and a DirectX 7 3D card – reasonably high. However, we've yet to come across a player who's had problems with the game's graphics engine. There's also a useful benchmarking tool within *CS: Source* for gamers to see if their PC is up to the task of running *Half-Life 2*, when it's released.

How can I get it? At the time of going to press, Valve have opened the beta to LAN cafes, those who bought *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*, or those who bought an ATi videocard with the *Half-Life 2* bundle. For those who are prepared to wait, it will be included within *Half-Life 2* as the multiplayer component.

What's included in the beta? A single map, de_dust, along with two player models, one terrorist and one counter-terrorist. All the weapons from *Counter-Strike* have been ported over with new textures, including the mighty machinegun. Only the riot shield has been left behind – good riddance, we say.

Counter-Strike: rushing to choke points, furious exchanges of gunfire, followed by nervous creeping as the remaining players mop up, or move to the objective. *CS: Source* doesn't mess with any of that – it just paints the stunning *Half-Life 2* physics technology over the top.

An example: you're playing as a terrorist, crawling slowly through the tunnel, well aware that ahead, you're going to enter the CT's line of sight. Behind you, a team-mate clips a free-standing tyre, sending it trundling past you, like something from Wacky Races. The CTs ahead are obviously on hair trigger alert too – a burst of gunfire is heard, and the hapless tyre hurtles back towards you. Confirmation that somewhere in the darkness, there's an M1A1 gunner waiting to play. You're trapped.

The new physics effects are striking. Where previously objects within the gamer were static, now barrels and crates can be knocked around the level to create temporary cover, or just to coo over. No two rounds of *Counter-Strike* ever play the same, thanks to the players exploring their own ideas on how to exploit the enclosed spaces. Now, the very scenery adds further possibilities. Broken bottle shards, empty milk crates, tubs of paint and rusting car parts all react perfectly to your actions. Shoot them, and they'll shatter, skidding across the ground. Lob a grenade instead and they'll be flung into the air, bouncing off walls, clobbering any players they come into contact with. Set off a C4 detpack in a pile of debris and shrapnel will ricochet off everything: tardy terrorists now have to escape, not only the blast radius, but any objects shot across the level. If they clip a player, they *will* hurt.

Rounds kick up dirt and ricochet off walls

It leads to some eerie, shared moments. In the middle of a firefight, a corpse might fly overhead, arms flailing in the air. Both you and your opponent pause firing for a brief second, watching it arc and crumple in the sky, before shaking your heads and resuming hostilities.

There are already some exploits: we've spotted thoughtful players stacking debris on explosives, forcing the CTs to scrabble around, clearing a space before starting to defuse.

Catching discarded weapons in mid-air is another staggering trick. Expect more as pro-gamers settle down with the new code, searching for an advantage.

Along with the improved physics, Valve have given Dust a striking graphical makeover. The grainy, pixellated textures have been abandoned in favour of higher resolution, bump-mapped beauties. Some have pointed out that Dust isn't the best map to show off the spangly new *Half-Life 2* graphics engine – all dull beige and brown. But there's a subtlety to the upgrade. There is now a gloriously decorated dome where a claustrophobic tunnel once stood. Sunbeams stream in from tiny portals overhead, illuminating the dust clouds. A few licks of peeling paint here, a detailed backdrop there – it adds up. What was once an anonymous collection of corridors and cubbyholes has been transformed into an abandoned *place*. This feels real. It bodes well for what is to come.

And it feels vicious. *Counter-Strike* has always been a fast game, single bullets to the head inflicting instant kills. But thanks to the physics effects, every shot carries weight. Squads are scattered by grenades, bullets ping off walls.

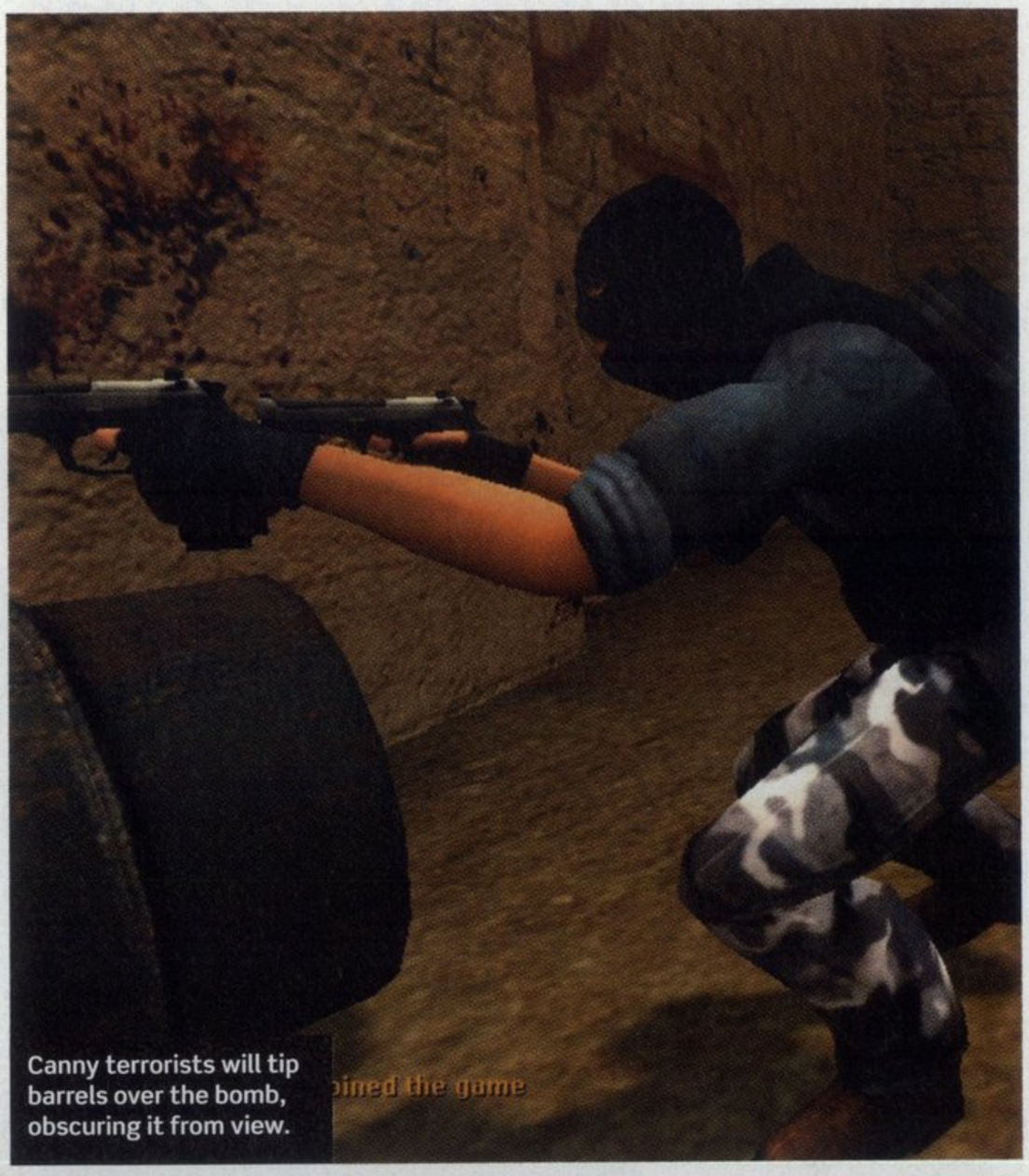
The sound effects are glorious – when the gunfire is muffled, you'll hear the rounds kicking up dirt and ricocheting off walls, all in 5.1 surround. Standing your ground in the face of such assaults can be terrifying: your own Black Hawk Down moment.

That's why we've fallen in love with *CS: Source* – it's not just about the technology. It's about applying the *Half-Life 2* technology standard to a multiplayer game. And it's stealing our lives all over again.

TIM EDWARDS

README

Publisher Valve
Developer In-house
Link www.steampowered.com
The most popular multiplayer first-person shooter gets a well-deserved makeover.



Canny terrorists will tip barrels over the bomb, obscuring it from view.

You know, we're going to get a bit of a reputation. Craig's obsessed with spilling blood on our tag.

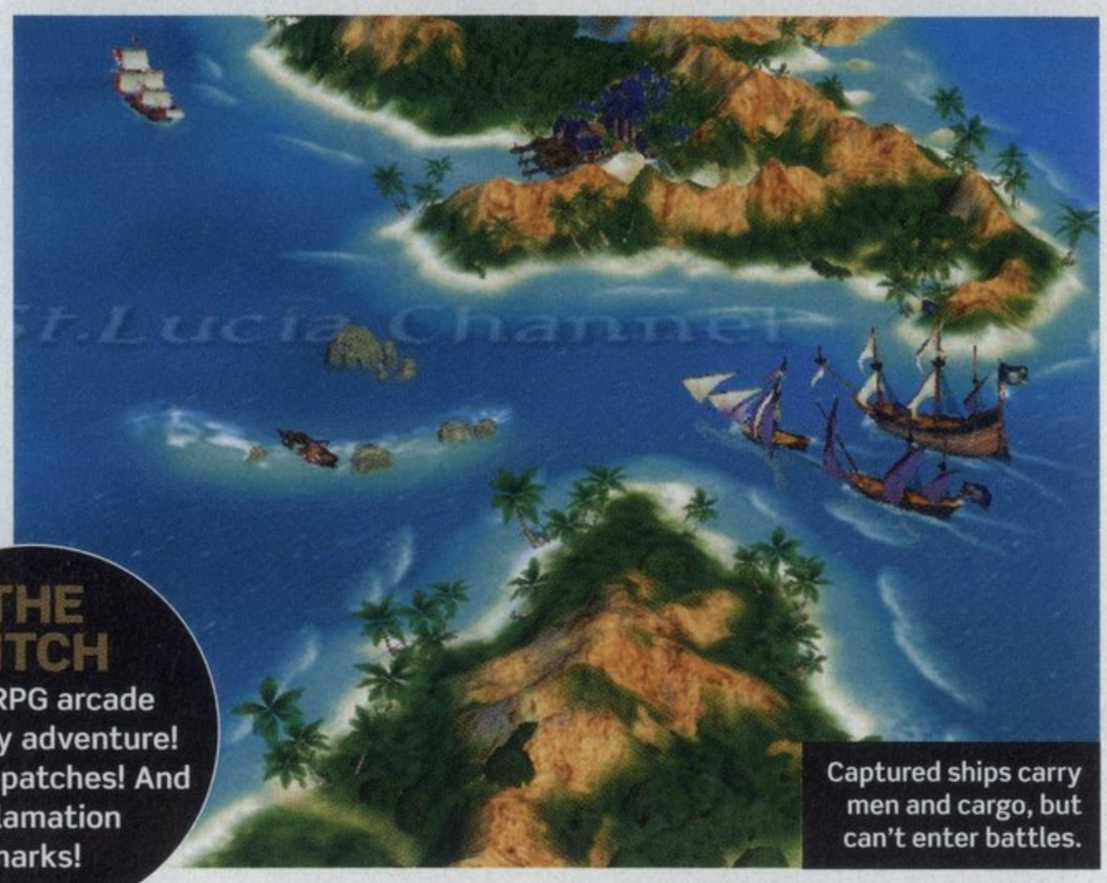
Avast behind! Fine marriage material, though

Sid Meier's Pirates!

REVIEW NEXT ISSUE

That exclamation mark isn't just for effect. It sums up Firaxis' gleeful, lighthearted approach to their subject; their pirates are more the dashing buccaneer type than the boozy, baby-eating variety. And in the same way that Sid Meier and co have cherrypicked from history and media portrayals to bring us the swashbuckling derring-doers they envisage, the game itself is a strange voodoo soup of genres as well.

THE PITCH
It's a RPG arcade strategy adventure! With eyepatches! And exclamation marks!



Captured ships carry men and cargo, but can't enter battles.

You begin as a fresh-faced mini-pirate: scant of beard and with all limbs intact. Your goal? To make money and a name for yourself. Bobbing around the Caribbean at a time of warring colonial powers brings no end of opportunities, and it's all controlled from the sea map, pictured above. Simple controls let you pootle into port or sidle up to ships. Depending on a town's alignment (the English, French, Dutch and Spanish all have interests in the area) and your reputation, you might be welcomed with open arms, wariness or the barrel of a gun.

But sidle up to another ship at sea and the cannon ball is in your court. It's a pirate's duty to attack and, when you do, the map switches to a zoomed-in view of the engagement, with your flagship under direct control. You'll have to be aware of the wind, as you're unable to sail into it, and manoeuvring is of the utmost importance. But the real naval niceties are disregarded as just too tedious. You're still able to dodge incoming cannon fire if you and your ship are nimble; then it's a case of ripping back with a furious broadside. Various types of shot are available – balls to knock holes in the hull, grapeshot to pepper the crew, and chain to wreck sails. As well as softening up your enemy, this damage can result in men and cargo being knocked overboard, to be picked up by your ship. Then, when you're quarry is helpless, sail up close and launch a boarding party.

He'll introduce you to his daughter

Well, it's more of a one-man party, in truth. The outcome of a boarding action depends on your swordfighting skills, as the enemy captain – provided he's no craven cur – will challenge you to a duel. Cue another shift of perspective: it's now side-on, and the timing of your thrusts and parries will result in you or your opponent being comically defeated. Win, and the ship is at your mercy. The gold and cargo is yours, and some of the defeated men may even ask to join your crew. The defeated ship can be added to your fleet.

Back on dry land, ships can be bought, sold, upgraded and repaired in a friendly port, while cargo – ill-gotten or not – can be similarly traded. But the real fun starts when you meet the governor. If he likes the cut of your jib, he'll introduce you to his daughter – the better your reputation, the prettier (and, sadly, bustier) the daughter. And so the much-vaunted dancing

ROGER THE CABIN BOY

...and say hello to the crew. Handy for manning the ship, expendable when it comes to sharing the treasure

1
Capture a vessel on the open sea, and some of the beaten crew may ask to join your gang. After a fierce battle, it's a smart way to make good your losses.

2
He might charge a fortune for pints of warm piss, but this codger's better than a local newspaper. He has the scoop on people you're looking for, news of missions, and more.

3
A reputation for derring-do or high deeds will also get you noticed by men in pubs, who'll want to come back to your ship to join in the action.

Add your own "*Ha!*" and "Have at you, dog!" soundtrack. You won't be able to stop yourself.

Get caught sneaking into an unfriendly town and you'll do time.

ensues, with timely steps effected by timely keystrokes. Dance well, and she might help with a gossipy tip-off, a side-mission or – eventually – an offer of marriage.

Only the rudimentary turn-based strategy combat that follows a hostile landing seems out of place in this otherwise thoroughly modern yet quaint game. *Pirates!* has a delicious, consistent style, blending a lush atmosphere with elegant cartoon-like presentation. As your pirate passes into old age over the course of perhaps eight hours, you might look back wistfully on the choices you made. A prettier wife? More swashbuckling? A second lifetime on the waves seems like an option we'll be happy to take.

ROSS ATHERTON

The higher your reputation, the prettier (and bustier) the daughter you get to dance with. *Leisure Suit Larry*'s malign influence spreads.

README

Publisher Atari
Developer Firaxis
Link www.firaxis.com
There's nothing parrot-fashion about this remake, and it's coming together nicely.

Sturmovik in a sarong

REVIEW NEXT ISSUE

Pacific Fighters

While George W Bush's military record might be a little short on derring-do, his pa's certainly deserves respect. Bush Senior flew 58 combat sorties as a WWII navy torpedo bomber pilot, made 126 carrier landings, and was shot down once, losing two crewmen in the process.

No game will ever tell us anything meaningful about the courage and strength of character required to survive an experience like that, but through sims like the imminent *Pacific Fighters* – a palmy, balmy follow-up to *IL2: Forgotten Battles* – we can get a feel for some of the skills involved. Skills like ungluing an eager Zero from your six o'clock, putting a tinfish into a frantically zigzagging American destroyer, or flopping a flak-ravaged Dauntless onto the slippery seesawing deck of a storm-tossed aircraft carrier while slurping tea and answering the phone.

That last scenario (minus the distractions) is something that Oleg Maddox and his talented team are working particularly hard to replicate accurately. In *PF*, unlike other Pacific flight sims, landing on a flat-top isn't just a case of extending your tail hook and plonking your plane onto the appropriate section of deck at the right speed and angle of attack. No, here individual arrestor cables are modelled and must be snagged pixel-perfectly if you don't want to go careering off toward a humiliating and possibly fatal brine bath.

If it all sounds horribly hard then take comfort from the fact that there'll be an 'easy' landing option for the callow and the cack-handed and plenty of chances to fly from rock-steady island strips too.

Ungluing an eager Zero from your six o'clock

Over the years we've become accustomed to Maddox sims being giant, box-bulging affairs and pleasingly *PF* is looking no different. Counting the army of contracted third-party developers there are now around 100 souls beavering away on planes, maps, and ground objects. The list of flyables is still to be finalised but will include most of the key single-engined Pacific participants plus plenty of less common rides like the Havoc, Beaufighter, Seafire, and Rufe (a webfooted Zero variant). We were a little surprised that ubiquitous US crates like the Avenger (Lt. Bush's steed) and Helldiver will likely come without cockpits but gather that post-release updates could well rectify this.

For those frustrated by the frail framerates and long load times that go with a few of *FB*'s more metropolitan maps, the vast ocean-dominated spaces in *Pacific Fighter* should be something of a tonic. Pearl Harbour will doubtless make demands but it's hard to see areas like Midway and the Solomons – even with the new fancy water effects and puffier clouds activated – taking much of atoll.

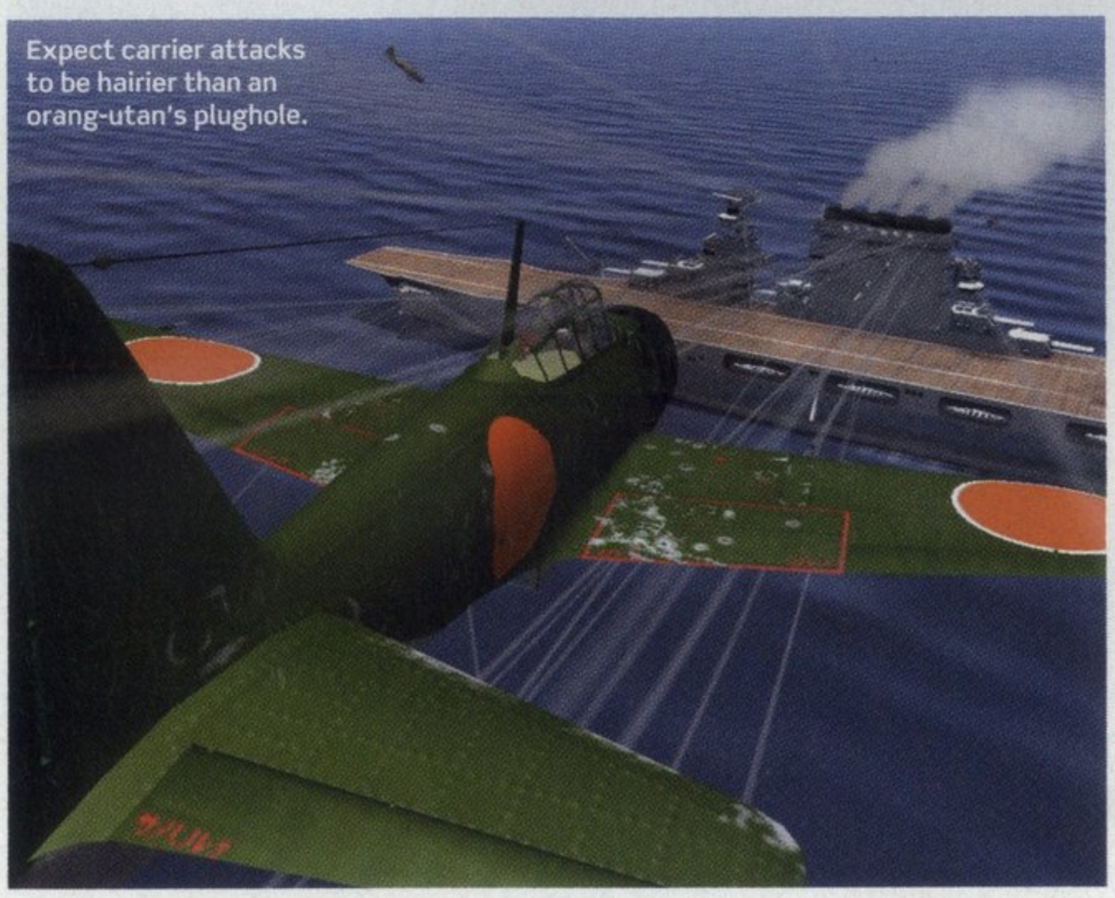
With that monstrous pun, we'll leave you to contemplate one the most exciting prospects in flight simulation since Dubya hinted he might have remembered something about his time in the Alabama Air National Guard.

TIM STONE

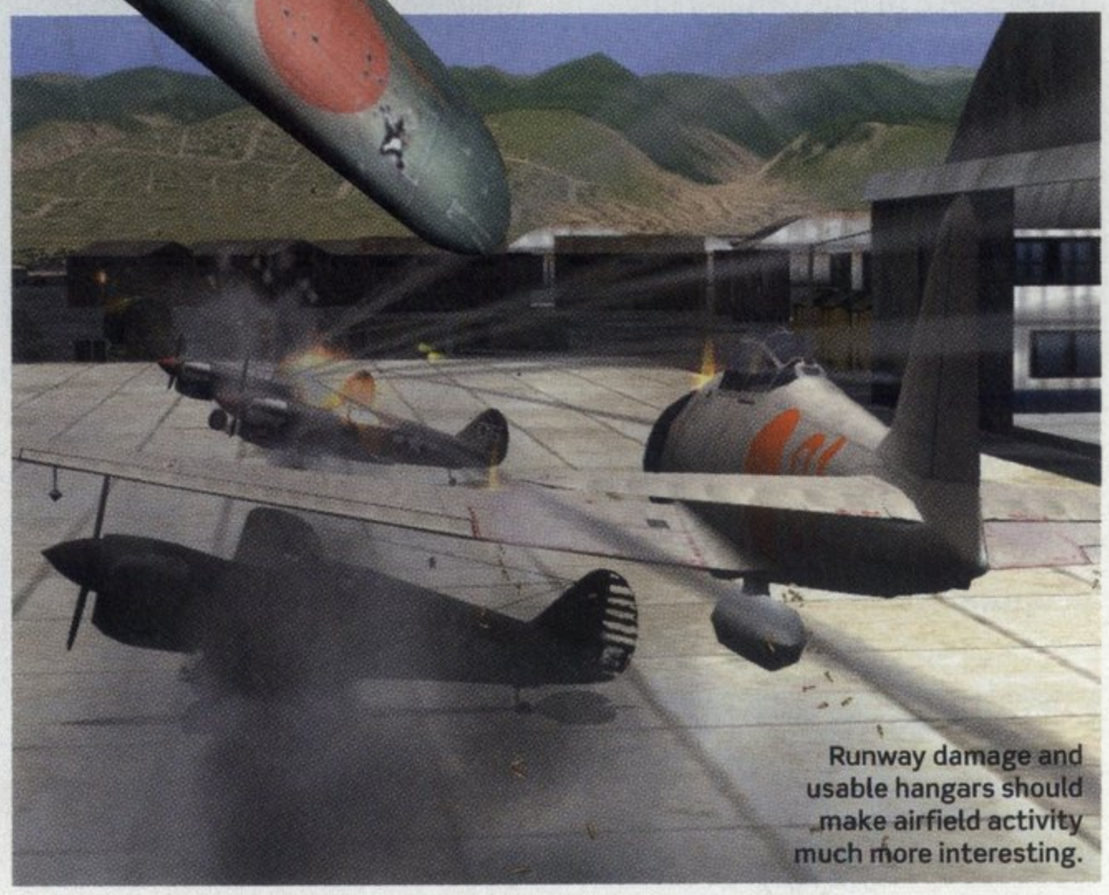
THE PITCH
Achingly faithful flight and fight foray, refreshingly free of Messerschmitts. Banzai!

README

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer 1C:Maddox
Link www.pacific-fighters.com
Could single-handedly salvage a pretty dismal year for flight-sim fans.



Expect carrier attacks to be hairier than an orang-utan's plughole.



Runway damage and usable hangars should make airfield activity much more interesting.

MILLA JOVOVICH

My name is Alice
and I remember everything.

RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE

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  Lines are open 9AM-5PM Monday - Friday
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CONDITIONS...

1. Information on how to enter, forms part of the terms and conditions of entry. To enter the competition, you must answer in 25 words or less: "which show I could watch for 60 hours straight and why". Eligible participants are required to provide their name, address, postcode and telephone number to complete their entry as well as subscribing to any of the magazines referred to below. **2.** Entry is open to all permanent residents of Australia and New Zealand when subscribing to the November issue of PC Games Addict, Australian T3 and What DVD magazines and the October issue of Australian Developer magazine. **3.** It is a game of skill and chance plays no part in determining winners. **4.** The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be transferred. Prizes cannot be redeemed for cash. **5.** The judging for the competition will take place on December 1, 2004, at Derwent Howard Magazines, Level 3, 75 Grafton Street Bondi Junction NSW. **6.** The promoter will not be held liable for any late, lost or misdirected mail. **7.** Employees and the immediate families of the promoter and the agencies and companies associated with the promotion are ineligible to enter. **8.** The winners will be notified by telephone, post or email. **9.** Prize values are the recommended retail value as provided by the supplier and are correct at the time of printing. All prize values are in Australian dollars. **10.** The promoter shall not be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever that is suffered (including but not limited to direct or consequential loss) or for any personal injury suffered or sustained in connection with any prize/s, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law. **11.** The competition commences on September 22, 2004 and concludes on November 17, 2004, with last mail received. **12.** All entries become the property of the promoter. **13.** Prizes and values are as follows: 5 x Topfield TF5000PVRt @ $1,099 each. **14.** The promoter is: Derwent Howard Magazines, ABN 400 958 728 89, of Level 3, 75 Grafton Street Bondi Junction NSW.

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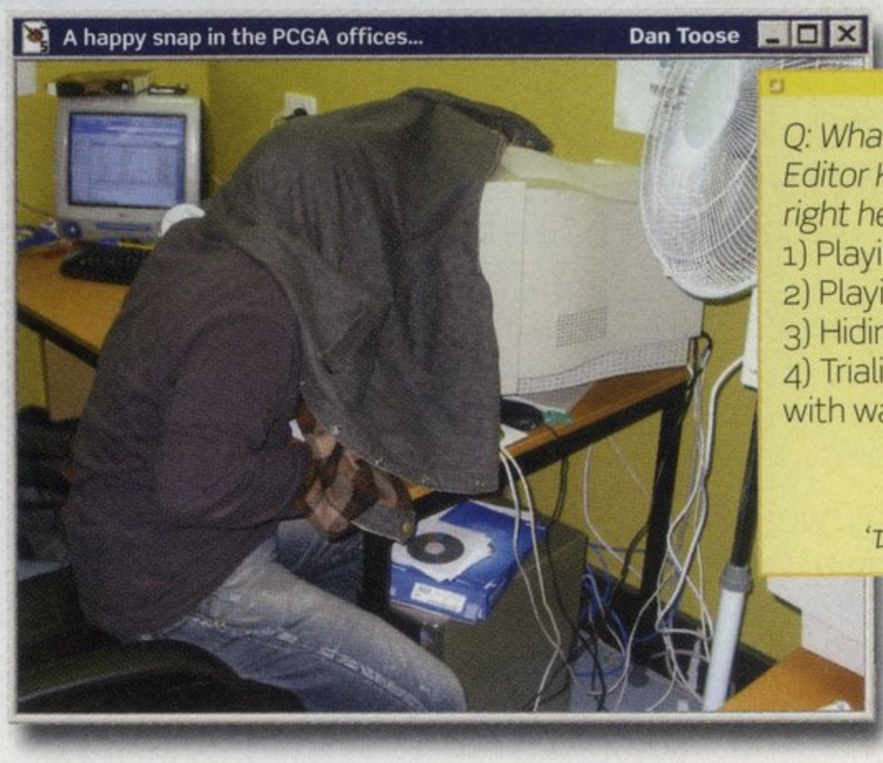
Gamer Snap

Marrying virtual photography and poor taste...



Q: What do you think Managing Editor Kevin Cheung was doing right here?
1) Playing *Doom 3*
2) Playing *Playboy the Masnion*
3) Hiding from reality
4) Trialing new ways to get away with watching prOn at work

A: 1) Playing Doom 3. Kevin: 1, Fluorescent lights: 0

CREATIVE

Need a capture program? Use IrfanView on the cover disc! Then send your snap & witty caption to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "SNAP" as the subject. Funniest entry each month wins an excellent set of **Creative T770 speakers**!

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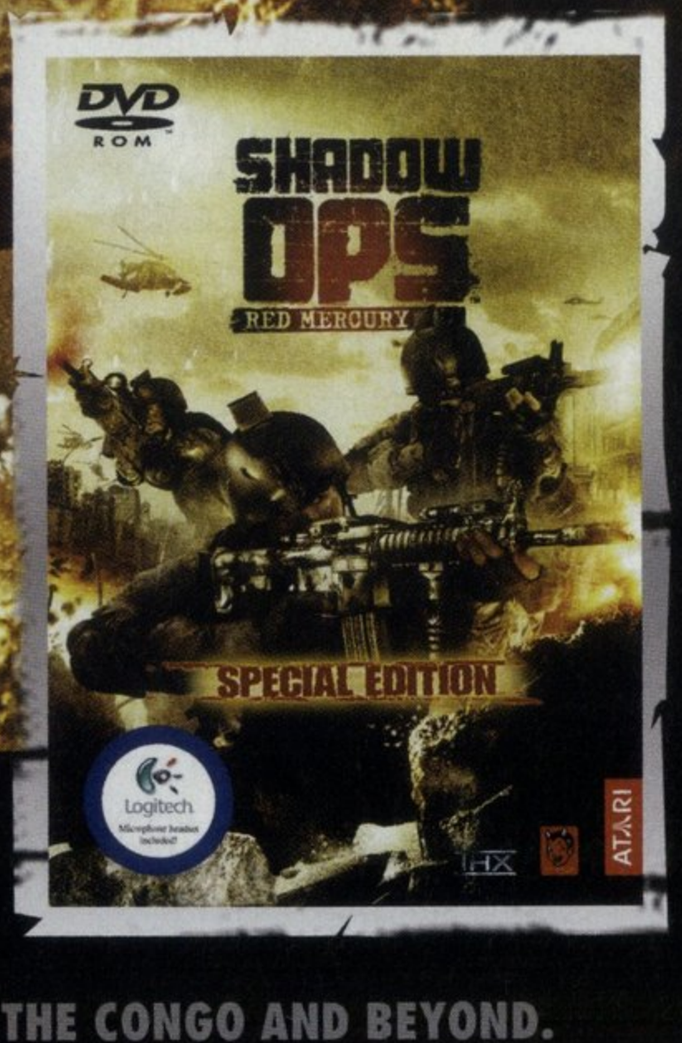

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Uncensored

Re-scrutinised by you guys... For a prize!

STAR WARS: KOTOR
Reviewed by Matt Smith

PCGA 19, Score 93%

The first decent *SW* game in yonks.

Some people like games which give them a quick fix. Others like myself, enjoy a story which can consume many hours of interaction within a living and breathing world. *Knights* is one of the best. Not being a big fan of *Star Wars*, I was a bit reluctent to give this a go. Once I loaded it up, I was amazed at the beautiful graphics and sound, and I soon found myself forgetting that this was related to *Star Wars*, and became full immersed into the game world.

The game play is great, with numerous paths to take. The speech is witty, and creates an atmosphere that is very much beleivable. You get to meet various characters, and take on heaps of challenges that will see you flying across many different planets. Each place is very distinctive, always pushing you to go that little bit further, and not want to stop playing. The controls are great, I personally used a control pad, and the PC options allow you to set high graphics and sound, which are amazing.

If you still havent played it, Its a must, and with *KOTOR2* around the corner, now is as good a time as ever!

Arran's Rating 94%

PCGA *responds: We loved it too, but if* Star Wars *isn't your bag, you'll be happy to know the* Baldur's Gate *games played almost exactly the same.* BG3 *should offer the same style of play, minus the droids, Gungans and Ewoks.*

READER REVIEW OF THE MONTH

PLANETSIDE
Reviewed by Jim Rhodes

PCGA 13, Score 93%

"Now I'd like you to turn using forward and reverse gears..."

How does one review the infinite in 150 words? That's the daunting challenge offered by *PlanetSide*. This is a world where three empires are locked in eternal struggle, victories are temporary and battlelines fluid.

Squads and platoons fly, drive, sneak into battle. Audio chatter fills the ether as pilots, gunners and passengers call targets, mark waypoints, reconnoitre. Medics tend the dead and wounded while engineers repair vehicles. Bitter siege warfare is juxtaposed with aerial combat, armoured skirmishes and smaller infantry firefights.

Put simply, you must experience this. Jumping out of a Galaxy while under fire and landing in the midst of an inferno of spitfire turrets, MAX units and very angry Elmos is something not to be missed. Sitting on a hack while the counter-attack storms in, defending tower spawn tubes as enemies pour down the steps, racing to rescue a hacked facility. Organised chaos? Pure entertainment. NC forever.

Jim's Rating 92%

PCGA *responds: Spot on. Don't give peace a chance: keep on fighting to the end.*

HAEGEMONIA
Reviewed by Will Masek

PCGA 8, Score 82%

I expected this to be, essentially, *Imperium Galactica 3*, offering me a galaxy to conquer any way I chose. My mistake.

I have some ships, and I have (shock horror) a mission objective. I had expected to be President of the Solar System, with my own private gargantuan battleship. Unfortunately, I'm only a Captain in charge of five fighter ships that couldn't rival a Vauxhall Corsa in size.

I persevered. I became a hero of the Earth-Mars conflict, I defeated the misguided Khariak and saw the galaxy threatened by the evil Darzok. And somewhere along the line, I forgot all about the games of the past and became immersed in the present.

> I became a hero of the Earth-Mars conflict

I would only shave 1% off of this title's previous rating, the limited multiplayer and lack of a singleplayer skirmish mode do shorten its play-life somewhat. None the less, a masterpiece and well worthy of its place in the game hall of fame.

Will's Rating 81%

Pretty colours. Brutal death. Yes.

PCGA *responds: In space no-one can hear you crush civilisations. That however, makes it no less satisfying to do.*

JNC

The reader review of the month wins an awesome portable **JNC SSF-31 MP3 Player**!
Send your words to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "UNCENSORED" as the subject, along with your contact details. Reviews **must** be 120-200 words so we can print them!

"With so many WWII shooters concentrating on teamwork, Mortyr II's solo gameplay is a welcome return to tense one-man-army action."
- PC Zone

Ego-Shooter achtung!

"Graphically, Mortyr II looks set to be quite spiffing actually, thanks to Mirage's home made Argon engine that does a fine job of replicating the look and feel of WWII battlefields."
- PC Zone

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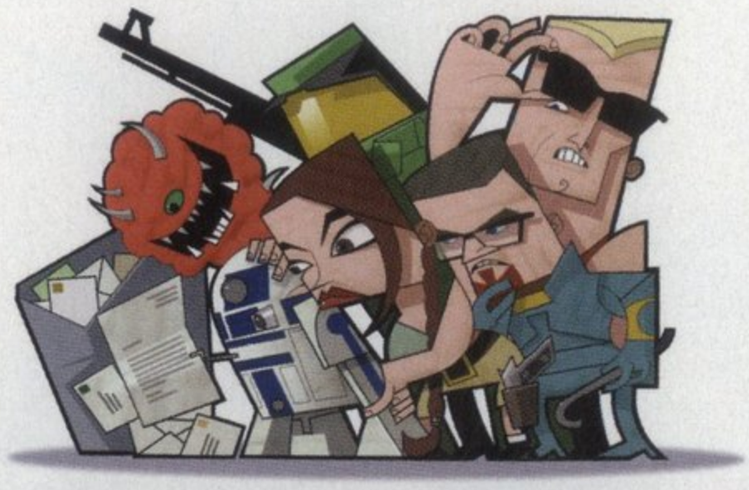
Cables



Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

Featuring: EA's new gravy train, wireless woes & more...

SHORTS

Is it just me, or are Bigpond the most evil ISP out there? For the past three months I've been carefully monitoring my data transfers, keeping track of my downloads and I do all my gaming on the GameArena servers, but Telstra keep insisting I'm going over my limit every month. Sound familiar?
Viper, via email

It does sound familiar, but several of the PCGA team have Bigpond accounts and none of us have had this problem at all. What makes it sound familiar is that people who have taken to wireless broadband without ensuring their network is secure can be bled dry by their neighbours. If your access points aren't protected, anyone with Wi-Fi can use your account to get online. Be aware! **PCGA**

Heya, I've noticed you guys have done a couple of pieces on *Nexus: The Jupiter Incident*, and I'm really into space-based games like *Freelancer* and *X2*. Problem is, when I asked about it at the shops, they haven't heard of it. Is it coming out here?
Ollie Becker, NSW

We've had one distributor say that they're likely to handle it here, although until they confirm, we can't really announce who. We urged them to secure the deal, as we really want it too! **PCGA**

Once and for all...

There has been so much debate and publicity on the censorship of games lately. However, the answer is so clear and could be implemented very easily. The use of classification for movies (PG, M15+ and R18+) should also be used for games. The two main reasons are as follows.

Firstly, if I had a young child, I would not want them to easily access a game which promoted adult themes such as over use of sex, or violence. Young people can be influenced easily, and there should at least be some type of barrier to make this material harder to access.

Secondly, as a 28 year old gamer, I have evolved from playing childish games, and feel that I should be allowed access to more adult themed games, as my needs have also grown. But I don't want to have to order a game from America or NZ because Australian rules have decided that the game is too violent (*GTA3, Ninja Gaiden, etc*).

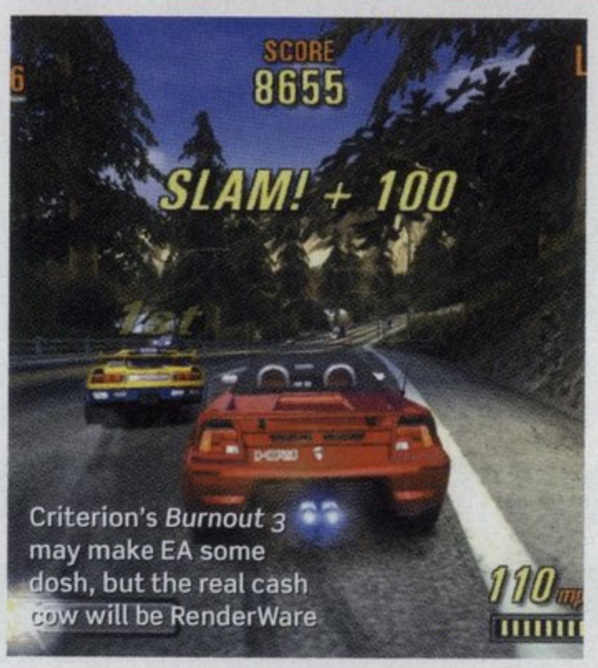
The answer is classification. Place ratings on games, allowing access for a particular age, whom the classification board feels are mature enough to play. The fact is, just like an R rated movie, kids will still find ways to access these games, but not the majority, and adult gamers, who do a major proportion of the purchasing, don't suffer.
M.A. Smith, via email

Censorship is becoming a bit of a tired issue, simply because there hasn't really been a policy change that's made any real difference in the past decade. That said, we do happen to be on the verge of missing another game due to the lack of an R classification - Namely Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude.

It may seem blasphemous that we're going to be missing out on the follow-up to a truly classic adventure game, and it is, but it's good to know why. The problem in this case is that if sex is presented in the game as a reward or goal, and that is why the game is refused classification.

Sure, we can see that there are some potential issues to face in the event that children do get their hands on these games, but we at PCGA would really love to hear the government justify their lack of policy change that simply encourages import buying. In the end, the kids can still get the games, and the only loser is our local industry. Well? **PCGA**

LETTER OF THE MONTH



Criterion's *Burnout 3* may make EA some dosh, but the real cash cow will be RenderWare

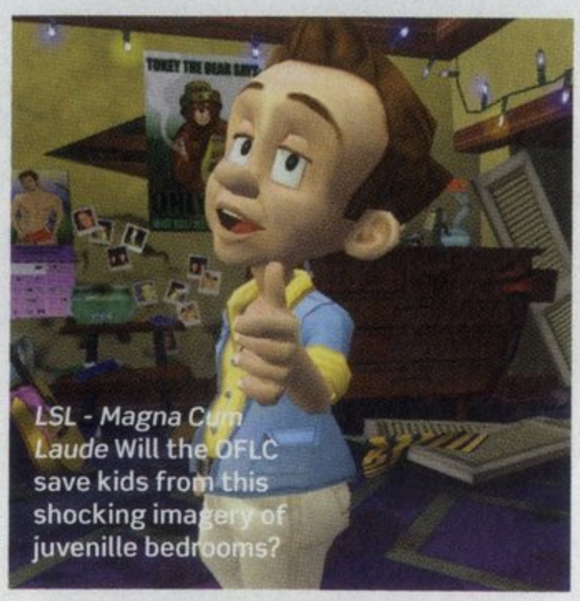
Monopoly by EA?

Doing my usual nightly trawl of gaming websites, I discovered that EA has bought Criterion, and that this is somehow giving them some sort of monopoly in computer gaming because of something called RenderWare.

I understand that RenderWare is used by other companies to help make games, but surely they can use something else? And if so, how does this deal give EA some sort of monopoly or advantage?
Luke Whittingmore, via email

Although you've somehow managed to overlook the fairly obvious explanation, we felt that your ability to realise the importance of this corporate takeover to gaming warranted the Letter of the Month.

Yes, it's true that RenderWare is just a creative suite for developers, and that games can be made without it. The thing is, a whole bunch of major titles like the GTA *and* Tony Hawk *games have been made using RenderWare, and EA will now receive royalties from their competition (publishers like Activision, Take 2, etc) for every game created with the suite. The money will keep flowing too, changing away from RenderWare will take a lot of time and money that some dev-teams just can't afford. It's like suggesting you move from away from Windows.* **PCGA**


LSL - Magna Cum Laude Will the OFLC save kids from this shocking imagery of juvenille bedrooms?

ATARI

The best letter of the month wins a bundle of great games from Atari's 'Heroes' range. Send your rants, ravings and reactions to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "CABLES" as the subject. Long or vulgar letters may be edited to fit or toned down accordingly...

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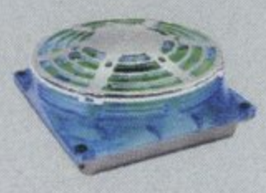
UFO#2 	UFO#2 + GOLF325		UFO#2 + PIPE101	UFO#2 + TOWER102	
UFO#3		UFO#3 + Hammer525		UFO#3 + TOWER102	UFO#3 + TOWER112
XBPRO#1	XBPRO#1 + GOLF325			XBPRO#1 + TOWER102	XBPRO#1 + TOWER112
XBPRO#2			XBPRO#2 + PIPE101	XBPRO#2 + TOWER102	
XBPRO#3	XBPRO#3 + GOLF325		XBPRO#3 + PIPE101	XBPRO#3 + TOWER102	XBPRO#3 + TOWER112
Silent Cat 8CM		Silent Cat 8CM + Hammer525		Silent Cat 8CM + TOWER102	Silent Cat 8CM + TOWER112
Silent Cat 9CM	Silent Cat 9CM + GOLF325		Silent Cat 9CM + PIPE101		Silent Cat 9CM + TOWER112
Street Fighter	Street Fighter + GOLF325		Street Fighter + PIPE101	Street Fighter + TOWER102	Street Fighter + TOWER112

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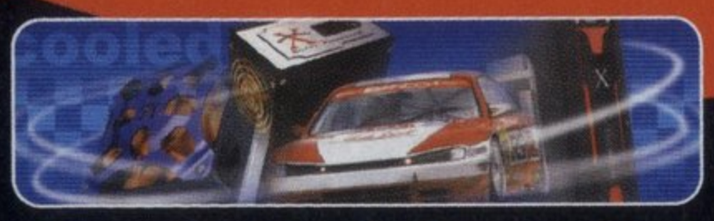

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PC GAMES ADDICT

REVIEWS

In which we put the new releases before our panel of PC gaming experts

Selection headaches

A good kind of problem... Too much quality at once!

If last month's issue was the beginning of the 'good game deluge' for 2004 with *Rome* and the *Sims 2*, then we now sit in the eye of the storm. In any normal issue of PCGA games like *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War* and *Evil Genius* would stand a good chance of being the lead review, but there's a pecking order in PC gaming, and Mr Freeman is at the top of the list.

If I wore a hat, mine would be coming off in recognition of Valve's amazing achievement of crafting a game that manages to live up to the unrivaled hype *Half-Life 2* has generated in recent years. In an industry where only a handful of developers have a reputation for waiting to get it right, Valve are on track to join id and Blizzard as one of the few developers not to release a stinker. All that remains now is for them to prove there's life after *Half-Life* (and I don't mean the other half).

But to fail to notice what else is going on this month just because of the second coming would be unforgivable. The aforementioned *Dawn of War* and *Evil Genius* both being top games with thier own distinct feel, plus other worthy titles like *Star Wars Battlefront*, *FIFA 2005*, *Call of Duty: United Offensive*, and *Colin McRae Rally '05* have left this issue with arguably the strongest review lineup of any PC Games Addict this year.

Unless you have a rather huge gaming budget, we strongly advise you make sure you keep this issue of PCGA handy over the coming months, because there's more worthy material here than you can possibly afford or have time for in just thirty days.

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

Scrutinised this issue...

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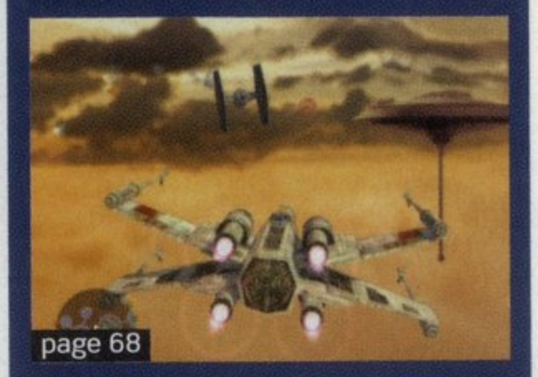
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The PCGA review rig

There's no point reviewing new games on old PCs, otherwise we wouldn't be doing them justice. After all, how can you tell how well a game runs until you've seen it on the best machine available?

That's why we've turned to Emagen. Not just because they're able to keep working with an up to date PC to put the games through their paces, but also due to the fact that we're certain that they do the best system assembly in the business. Look at the picture below and you won't find a stray ATA cable or screw out of place. If you're serious about assembling the best machine you can, you'd do well to contact Emagen.

THE PC GAMES ADDICT REVIEW MACHINE:

- AMD Athlon XP 3000+
- Asus A7N8X Deluxe
- Corsair TWINX 512MB PC3200
- 128MB Radeon 9800 Pro
- 19" Mitsubishi Flat CRT Monitor
- Western Digital WD800JB HDD
- 16X DVD, 52x24x52 CDRW
- Antec LanBoy Chassis
- Mitsubishi 104Key Black Keyboard
- Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer

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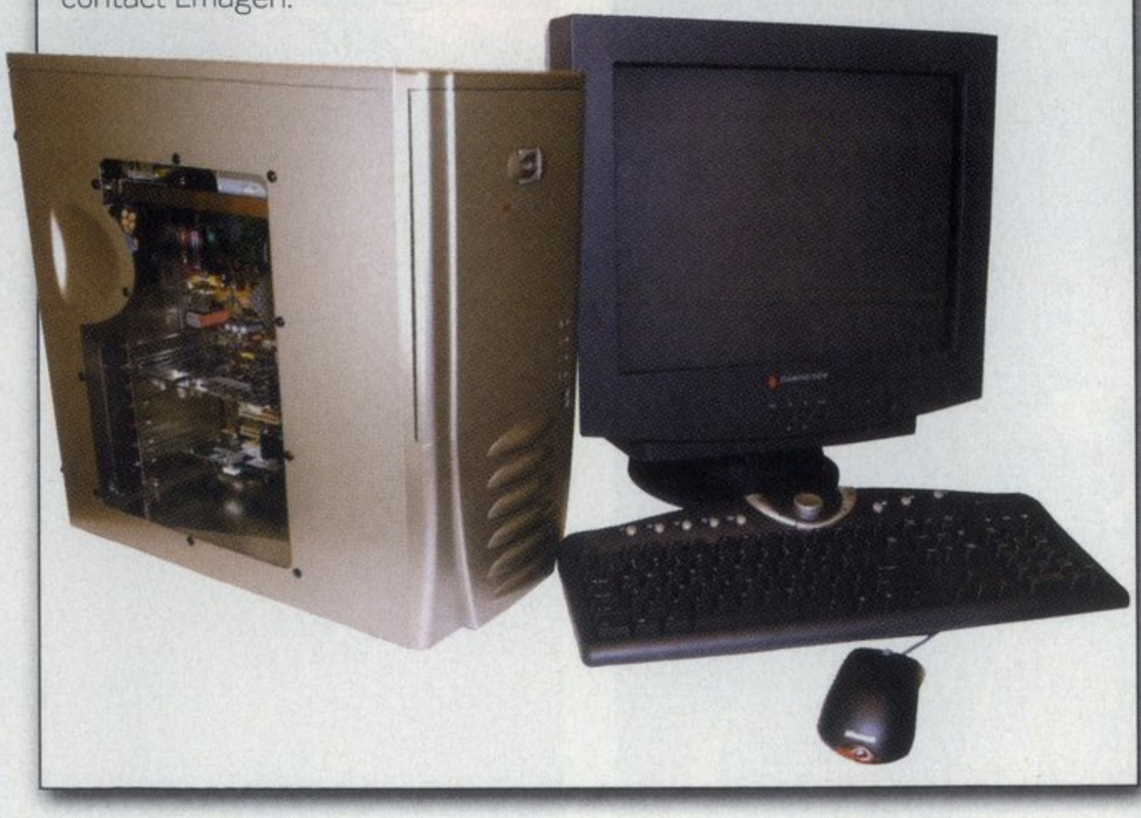


Our Scoring System Explained

0-19% ABOMINABLE
Game crime. If you see this game do not approach. Call the appropriate authorities and have it removed.

20-49% POOR
A deeply troubled and troubling effort. Think twice, even if you find it lurking in the bargain bin.

50-69% MEDIOCRE
Fans of the theme or genre can extract limited fun if they persevere. Otherwise, put your wallet away.

70-84% GOOD
Consistently enjoyable but lacks that spark of genius. Superior alternatives are usually available.

85-89% EXCELLENT
A first-class title that guarantees great gaming. Fans of the genre will revel in it.

90%+ EXCEPTIONAL
Instant classic. These games are worth trying even if you don't normally like the genre.

THE PCGA AWARD

Just as our scoring system implies, if it gets 85% or higher, it's a game worthy of your hard earned dollar. Our **GOLD GAME** award will help you spot games **PCGA** recommend.

PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★

RIGHT TO REPLY

Think we've treated a game unfairly? Or perhaps we've gone too easy on a game. Address your redress to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** or write to us via snail mail by sending your correspondence to **Feedback, PC Games Addict, Derwent Howard, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355**

Review

HALF-LIFE 2

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

No, we can hardly believe it either

It was all in that moment when I just sat back and laughed. I couldn't believe it was quite this good. I chuckled in muddled disbelief, expectations utterly defied. My nervous fingers reloaded the level, knowing that I had to see that breathtaking sequence one more time. It was then that I knew for certain: Valve had surpassed not only themselves, but everyone else too. *Half-Life 2* is an astounding accomplishment. It is the definitive statement of the last five years of first-person shooters. Everything else was just a stopgap.

Half-Life 2 is a near perfect sequel. It takes almost everything that worked from *Half-Life* and either improves on it, or keeps it much the same. But that simple summation undersells how the Valve team have approached this task. *Half-Life 2* is a linear shooter with most of the refinements one would expect from years of work, but it is also a game of a higher order of magnitude than any of the previous pretenders to the throne. The polish and the stratospheric height of the production values mean that *Half-Life 2* is a magnificent, dramatic experience that has few peers.

I had to see that sequence one more time

It would be madness for me to spoil this game by talking about the specific turn of events, so spoilers are going to be kept to a minimum. We're going to talk about general processes and the elements of style and design that make *Half-Life 2* such an energising experience. Key to this is the way in which Gordon's tale is told. Once again we never leave his perspective. There are no cut-scenes, no moment in which you are anything but utterly embedded in Gordon's view of the world. Everything is told through his eyes. And what a story it is. Gordon arrives at the central station at City 17 – a disruptive and chilling dystopia. And from there? Well, that would be telling. This is not the contemporary America that Gordon seemed to be living in during the original *Half-Life*. The events of Black Mesa have affected the whole world. The crossover with Xen has meant ▶

Thumbnail Review

Bask in the light of Gordon Freeman's geek messiah status.

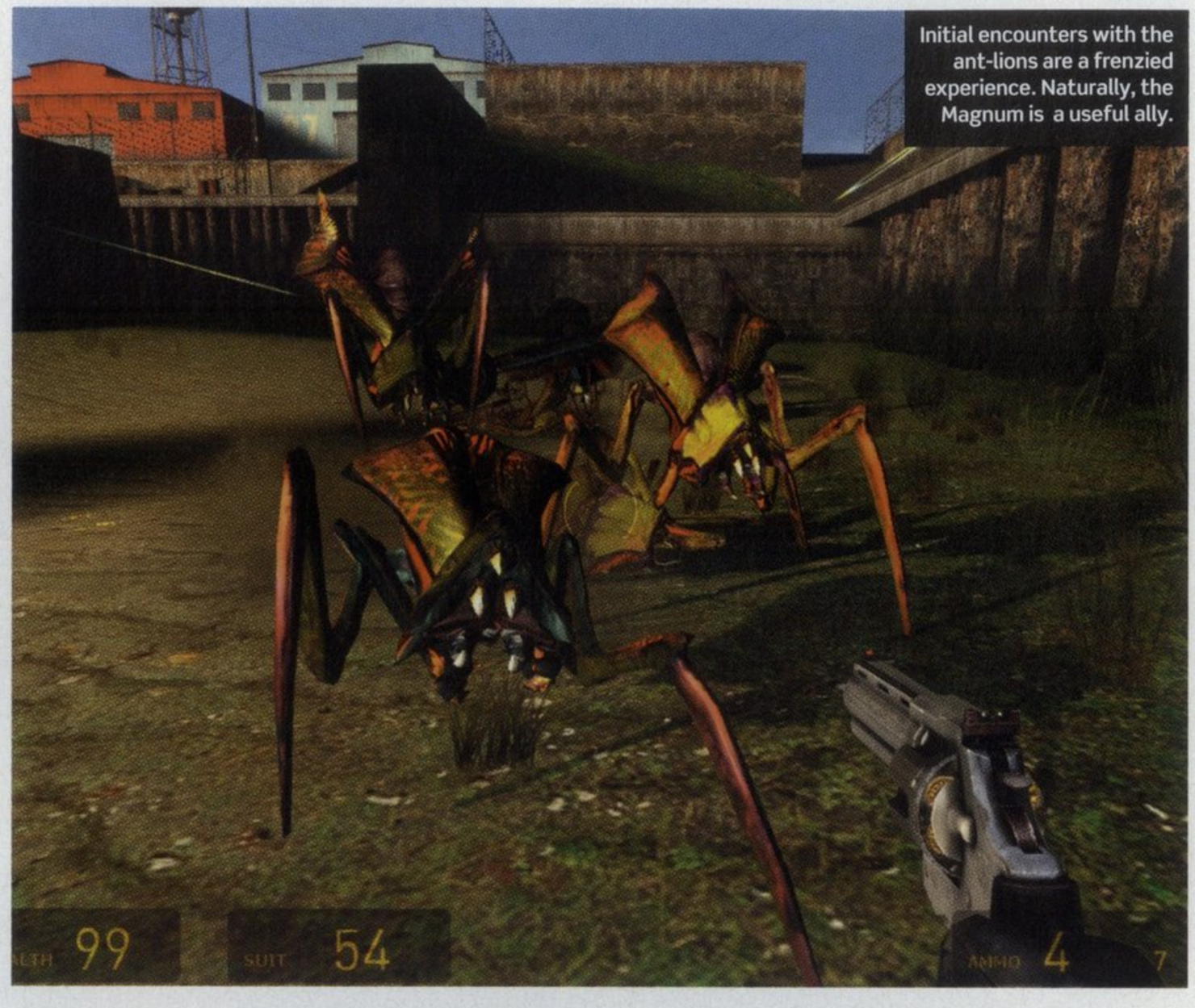
- ☑ Shoot
- ☑ Think
- ☑ Manipulate
- ☒ Talk to the aliens

A symphony of shooting, a ballad of blastery. Gordon's story finds a new and astonishing trajectory in a brutal dystopia. Own this.

This is where the fun begins. The gravity gun can be used to pick up various objects, including buzzsaw blades.

HALF-LIFE 2

At close quarters, the shotgun is simply unbeatable.



Initial encounters with the ant-lions are a frenzied experience. Naturally, the Magnum is a useful ally.

that things have altered radically, with hyper-technology existing alongside eastern bloc dereliction. The world is infested with head-crab zombies and the aliens that were once your enemies now co-exist among the oppressed masses. This very European city is populated by frightened and desperate American immigrants, and sits under the shadow of a vast, brutalist skyscraper that is consuming the urban sprawl with crawling walls of blue steel. It's a powerful fiction. City 17 is one of the most inventive and evocative game worlds we've ever seen. The autocratic and vicious behaviour of the masked Overwatch soldiers immediately places you in a high-pressure environment. People look at you with desperate eyes, just waiting for the end to their pain, an end to the power of the mysterious Combine. Who are they? Why are you here? Who are the masterminds behind this tyranny? The questions pile up alongside the bodies.

The questions pile up alongside the bodies

Half-Life 2 isn't big on exposition, but the clues are there. You're thrust into this frightening near-future reality and just have to deal with it. Your allies are numerous, but they have their own problems. Your only way forward is to help them. And so you do, battling your way along in this relentless, compelling current of violence and action, gradually building up a picture of what has happened since Black Mesa. The Combine, the military government that controls the city in a boot-stamping-face march of oppression, are a clear threat, but quite how they came to be and what their purposes are become aching problems. Once again Gordon remains silent, listening to what he is told so that you can find those answers for yourself.

But even with Gordon's vaguely sinister silence (something that is transformed into a subtle joke by the game's characters) there are reams of dialogue in *Half-Life 2*. It is spoken by bewilderingly talented actors and animated with almost magical precision. Alyx, Eli, ▶

RIOT GRRL

"I know we haven't known each other very long, but..."

Alyx ensures Gordon understands vital elements of his experience, as well as being generally charming and cool.

1

It's always nice to see a friendly face, and there are few friendlier than the beautifully characterful Alyx. Some of the game's best moments centre around her actions.

"It's the sparkplugs, mate. It'll cost..."

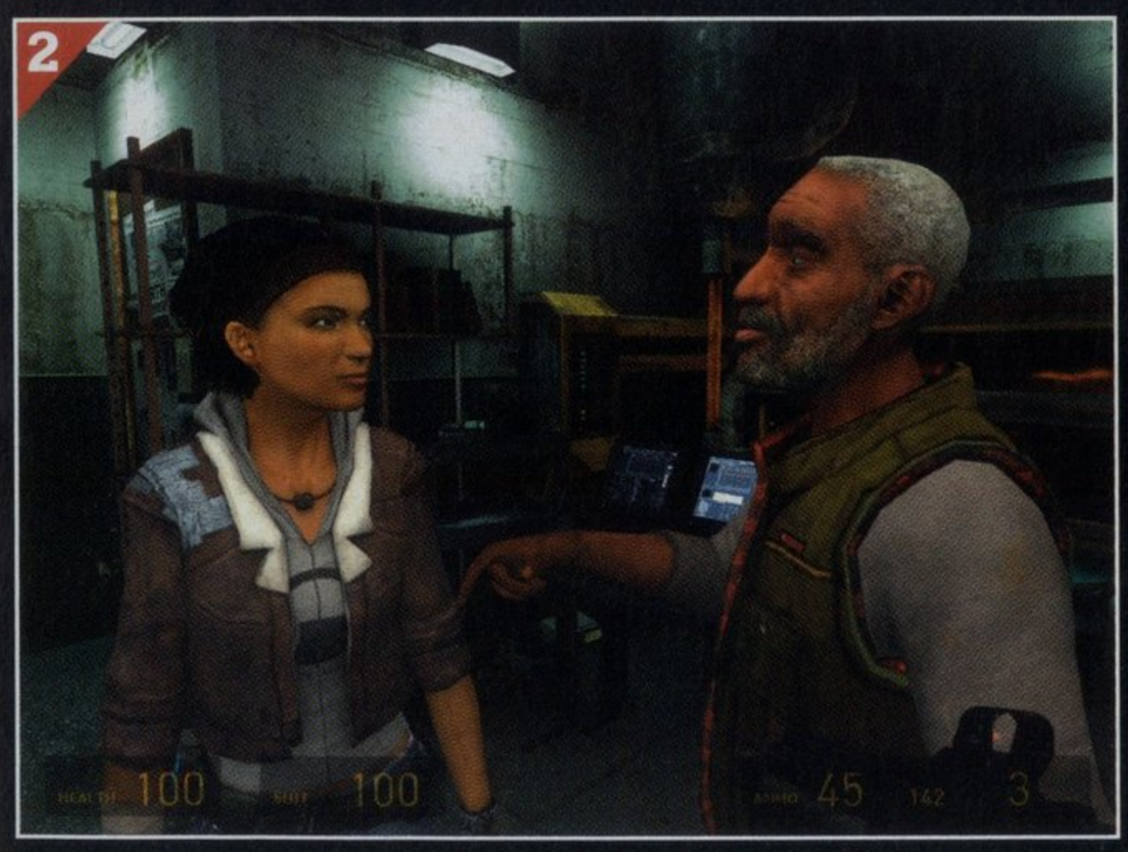
URBAN DECAY Buildings should be explored, and all their boxes, crates and cans raided for loot. Ammo, suit charges and medkits will be hidden around the gaff. There's a huge amount of exploring to be done, especially along the coastline.

INSTANT FIREWORKS Innocuous barrels make some of the best weapons. The noise these fellas make when they go up is what 5.1 sound systems were designed for. They also have a knock-on effect on the surrounding scenery: physics hilarity ensues.

ONE RECKLESS OWNER The buggy is a nippy little beast that can be used to pull off stylish handbrake turns. It's a bit unstable, though, so you'll end up on your roof a fair bit. Also note the Tau cannon strapped to the front. Useful.

CHUCK AND PULL Sweet, sweet gravity gun. This experimental beauty is the core tool in all *Half-Life 2*'s most wondrous moments. Use it to pull and throw to your heart's content. It gives the game a really physical status and makes catching grenades a joy.

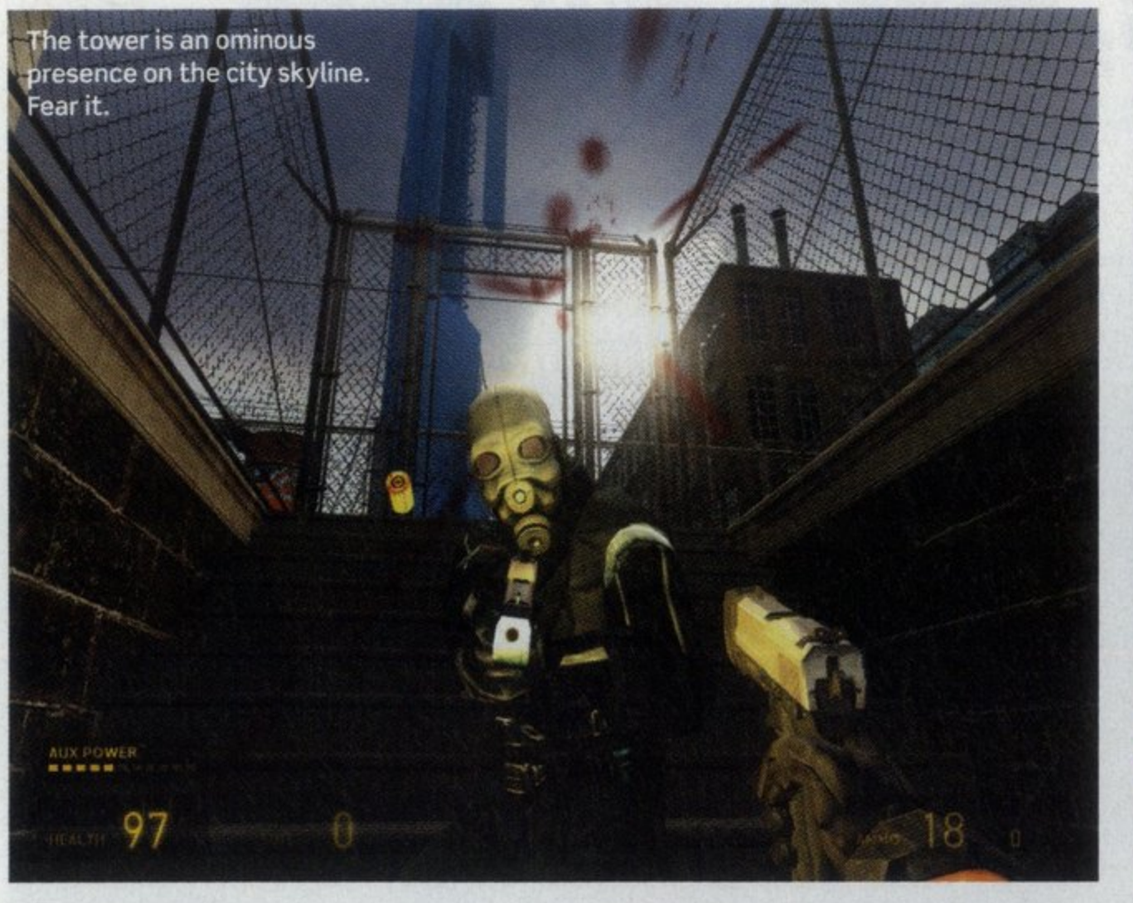
DR FREEMAN, I PRESUME? A rebel soldier. He might have bad hair but this fellow will help you out, guiding you in the right direction and lending a hand in the firefight to follow.



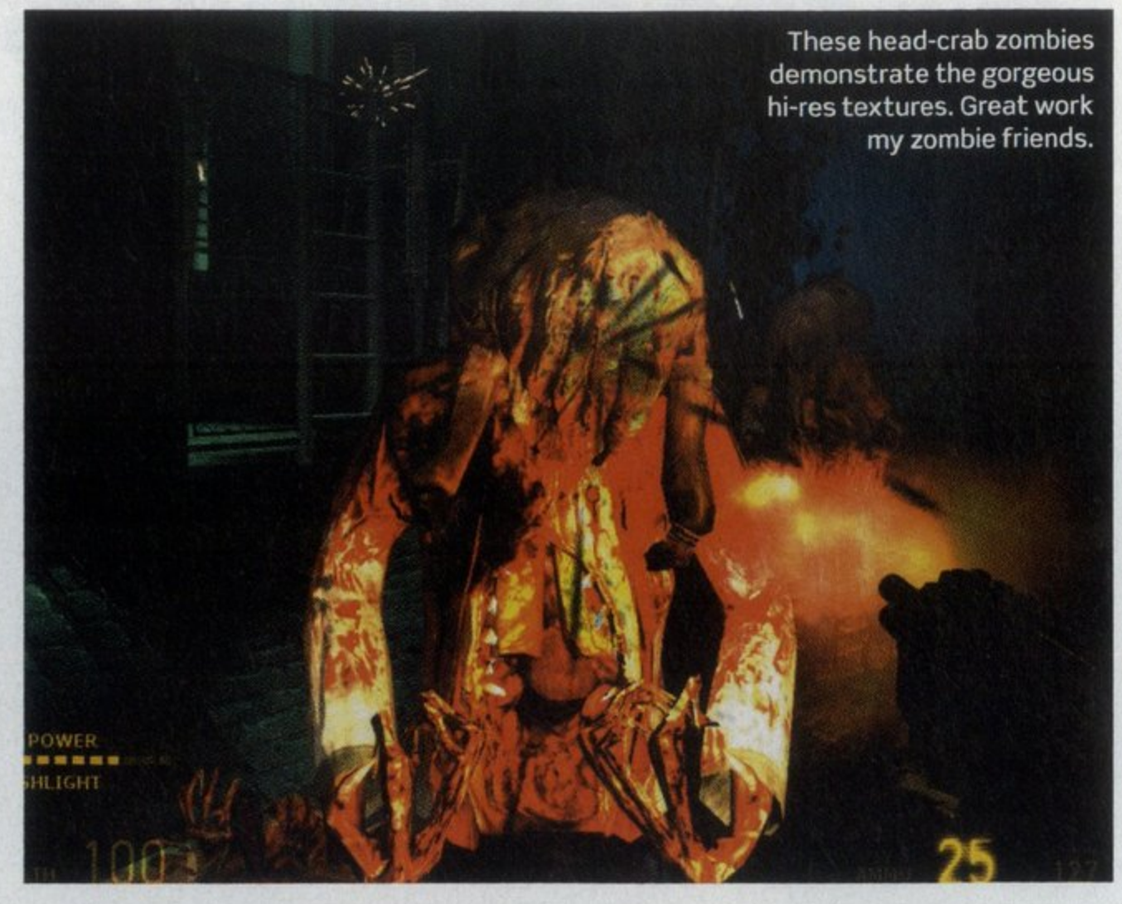
Alyx and Eli are as happy as everyone else to have the legendary Gordon Freeman on their team, but soon things go awry and your adventure twists like a rat's tail.

Luckily there's some additional firepower on hand. Alyx is helpful in showing Gordon the ropes. She also has a pet dog. Don't let him hump your leg.

HALF-LIFE 2



The tower is an ominous presence on the city skyline. Fear it.

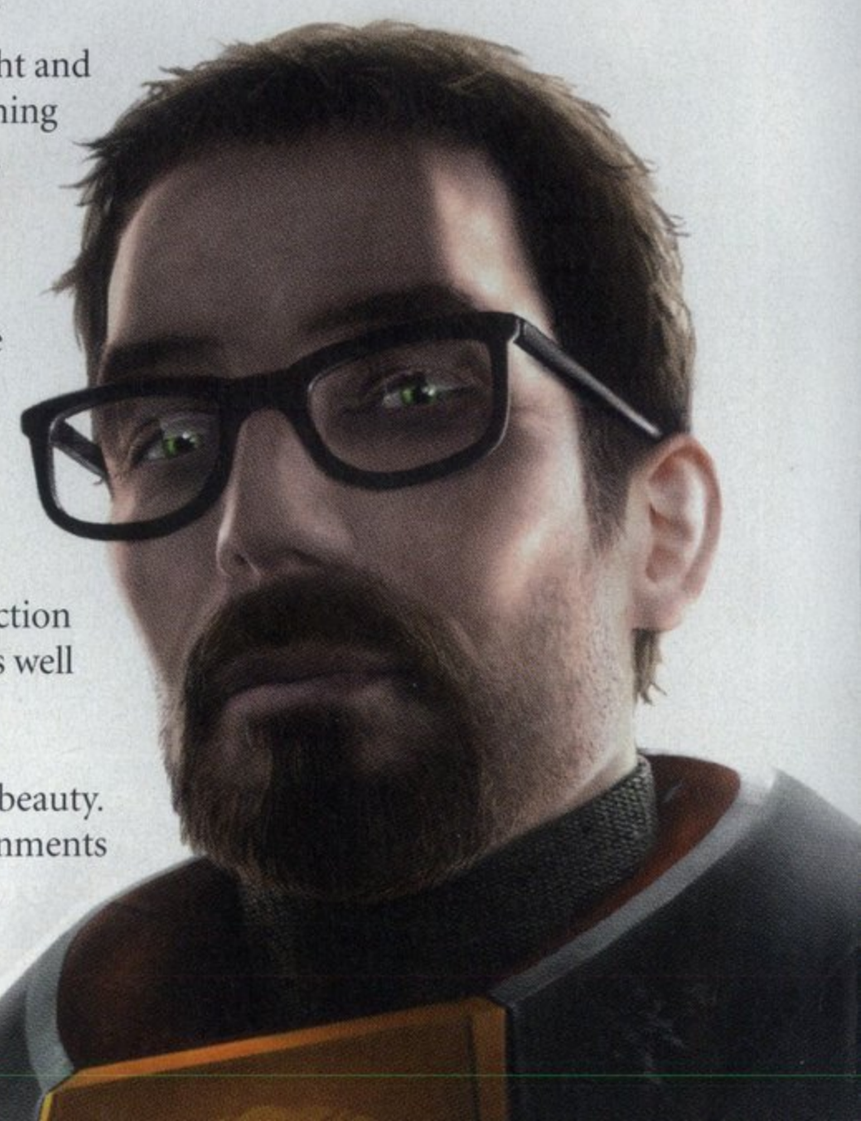


These head-crab zombies demonstrate the gorgeous hi-res textures. Great work my zombie friends.

Barney and Dr Kleiner are delightful to behold, but they only tell part of the story. There are dozens of other characters, each with their own role to play. And each one is a wondrous creature. They might be blemished, even scarred, with baggy eyes and greasy hair, but you can't tear your eyes away. People, aliens and even crows have never seemed quite so convincing in a videogame. *Doom 3*'s lavish monsters are more impressive, but *Half-Life 2*'s denizens are imbued with *life*. More importantly, they offer respite. *Half-Life 2*'s world is a high-bandwidth assault on the senses that seldom lets up. That moment when you see a friendly face is a palpable relief. A moment of safe harbour in a world of ultraviolence. As Gordon travels he is aided by the citizens of City 17 and the underground organisation that aims to fight the oppressors. Their hidden bases are, like the characters who inhabit them, hugely varied; an abandoned farm, a lighthouse, a canyon scrapyard and an underground laboratory – all superbly realised.

It is this all-encompassing commitment to flawless design that makes *Half-Life 2* so appealing. Even without the cascade of inventiveness that makes up the action side of events, the environments become a breathtaking visual menagerie. Cracked slabs and peeling paint, future-graffiti and mossy slate, tufts of wild grass and flaking barrels, shattered concrete and impenetrable tungsten surfaces – City 17 and its surrounding landscape make you want to keep exploring, just to see what might be past the next decaying generator or mangled corpse. Whether you find yourself in open, temperate coastline or mired in terrifying technological hellholes, *Half-Life 2* presents a perfect face. The first time you see ribbed glass blurring the ominous shape of a soldier on the other side, or any time you happen to be moving through water, you will see next-generation visuals implemented in a casual, capable manner. *Half-Life 2* doesn't have *Doom 3*'s groundbreaking lighting effects, but objects and characters still have their own real-time shadows and the level design creates a play of light and dark that diminishes anything we've seen in other games. The very idea that people have actually created this world by hand seems impossible, ludicrous. The detritus in the back of a van, the rubbish that lies in a stairwell – it all seems too natural to have come about artificially. Add to this the split-second perfection of the illustrative music, as well as the luscious general soundscape, and you have genuinely mind-boggling beauty.

But these virtual environments are little more than a stage on which the action will play out. And what jaw-dropping, mind-slamming action that is. What's tough to convey in words, or even screenshots, is just how much impact the events of combat confer. This is a joyous, kinetic action game. The concussive sound effects, combined with the physical solidity of weapons, objects, enemies and environment, make this a shocking experience. Each encounter is lit up with abrupt and impressively brutal effects. Explosions spray shrapnel and sparks, bullets whack and slam with devastating energy. The exploding barrel has never been such a delight. You think that you've seen exploding barrels before, but no: these impromptu bombs, like everything else in the game, are transformed by the implementation of revelatory object physics. Unlike previous games, the object physics in *Half-Life 2* are no longer a visual



TRIPODS!

They call him Strider

Striders make a meal of just about anyone, or anything

As in *Call of Duty* you fight your way across the ruins with a team of soldiers. Only there are no giant robots in *CoD*.

As well as machineguns, the striders are armed with massively powerful beam weapons that leave enormous craters.

Behind the strider you can see a dropship. These units bring in troops, trucks and striders slung neatly under its belly.

Survive, and you and the remaining rebel troops can take the fight to the rooftops and the sniping Combine soldiers.

Characters react to you in astonishingly believable ways.

gimmick – they are integral to the action and, indeed, the very plot. Gordon can pick up anything that isn't bolted down, then place, drop or hurl it anywhere you choose. Initially this consists of little more than shifting boxes so you can climb out of a window, but gradually tasks increase in complexity. Puzzles, ever intuitive, are well signposted and entertaining. If they're tougher than before they're still just another rung up on what you've already learned. This is immaculate game design. There are a couple of moments in these twenty hours where something isn't perfect in its pace or placing, but these are minor, only memorable in stark contrast to the consistent brilliance of surrounding events. There is always something happening, something new. You find yourself plunging into it with relish. Just throwing things about is immediately appealing. You find yourself restraining the impulse to just pick up and hurl anything you encounter. (Free at last, I can interact!) Black Mesa veteran Dr Kleiner is remarkably relaxed about you trashing half his lab, just to see what can be grabbed or broken. Combine police take less kindly to having tin cans lobbed at their shiny gasmasks.

But the core process of this new physics, the key to the success of the game, is to be found in the Gravity Gun. Once you've experienced vehicular action and got to grips with combat, *Half-Life 2* introduces a new concept – the idea of violently manipulating objects with this essential tool. The gun has two modes: one drags things toward you and can be used to hold, carry or drop them. The other projects them away and can either be used to smash and punch or, if you're already holding something, hurl it with tremendous force. A filing cabinet becomes a flying battering ram, dragged towards you and then fired into enemies, only to be dragged back and launched again to hammer your foe repeatedly, or until the cabinet is smashed into metal shards. Pick these up and you can blast them through the soft flesh of your enemies. Killing the bad-guys with nearby furniture becomes habitual, instinctive. Or perhaps you need cover from a sniper – picking up a crate will give you a makeshift shield with which to absorb some incoming fire. Likewise, you immediately find yourself using the gravity gun to clear a path through debris-blocked passages, or to pick up ammo and health packs, or to grab and hurl exploding barrels at encroaching zombies, setting them ablaze and screaming. You can even use it to grab hovering Combine attack-drones and batter them into tiny fragments on concrete surfaces. Soon the gravity gun is proving useful in solving puzzles, or ▶

A filing cabinet becomes a battering ram

ULTRADEATH

"I've got a brand new Combine harvester."

MIT graduate he might be, but Gordon is nevertheless a precocious butcher of men

On their own the soldiers are fairly easy to track and kill, but they have powerful grenades at their disposal and devastating double-barrelled shotguns.

The Combine's minions come in various shapes and sizes. Here my attack on one has caused the rest to circle the house and attack from different angles. I won't survive.

Troops are sometimes supported by air-power, ranging from helicopters to these organic, almost aquatic roto-craft that move like whales and spit hot lead.

HALF-LIFE 2

Combine troops provide a consistently dangerous challenge in combat.

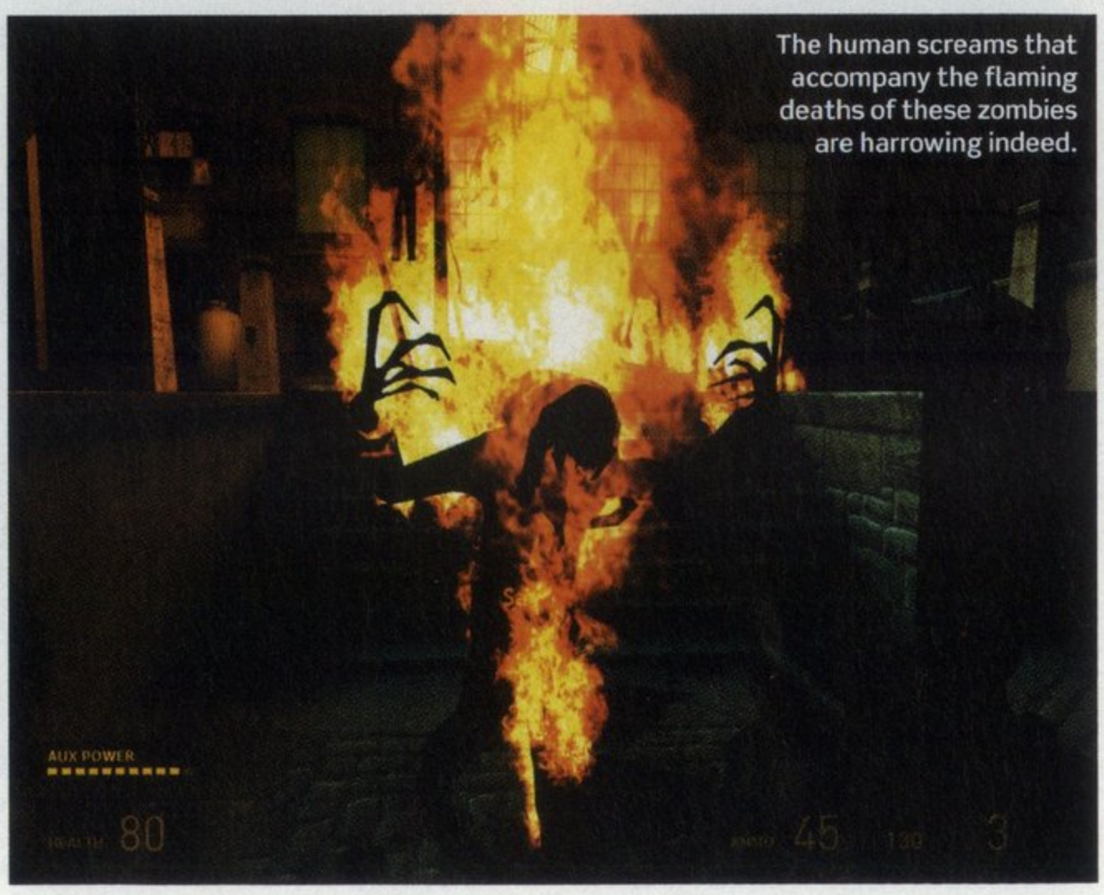
Situations constantly alter, meaning constant fun.

knocking your up-turned buggy back onto its wheels. Yes, a buggy. I'll come back to that. The gravity gun isn't just another a weapon, it's the soul of *Half-Life 2*. Do you try to bodge the jump over that toxic sludge, or take the time to use the level's physics objects to build an elaborate bridge? Do you waste ammo on these monsters or pull that disc-saw out of where it's embedded in the wall? Of course, you always know what to do. When there's a saw floating in front of your gravity gun and two zombies shamble round the corner, one behind the other, well, you laugh at the horrible brilliance of it. Yeah, I think that was the moment that I sat back and laughed. It's just too much.

Some time after these experiments in viscera comes Gordon's glorious road trip. Simplicity incarnate, the little buggy is practically indestructible, but also an essential tool for making a journey that Gordon can't make on foot. Dark tunnels, treacherous beaches and bright, trap-littered clifftops become the new battleground. Like the rest of the game there are oddities and surprises thrown in all the way through. The bridge section of this journey would make up an entire level in lesser shooters. And yet here it is, just another part of the seamless tapestry of tasks that Gordon performs. Also illustrative of the game as a whole is the way in which the coast is strewn with non-essential asides. OK, so you're zooming from setpiece to setpiece, but do you also want to explore every nook and cranny, every little shack that lies crumbling by the roadside? Of course you do. This is a game where every hidden cellar or obscure air-duct should be investigated; you never know what you might find.

Investigating means using the torch that, oddly, is linked to a minor criticism of the game. Both sprinting and flashlight use are linked to a recharging energy bank. It's clear why this

The pistol is fine for 'suppressing' the local cops, but full-blown soldiers require different treatment.



The human screams that accompany the flaming deaths of these zombies are harrowing indeed.

SPLASHDOWN

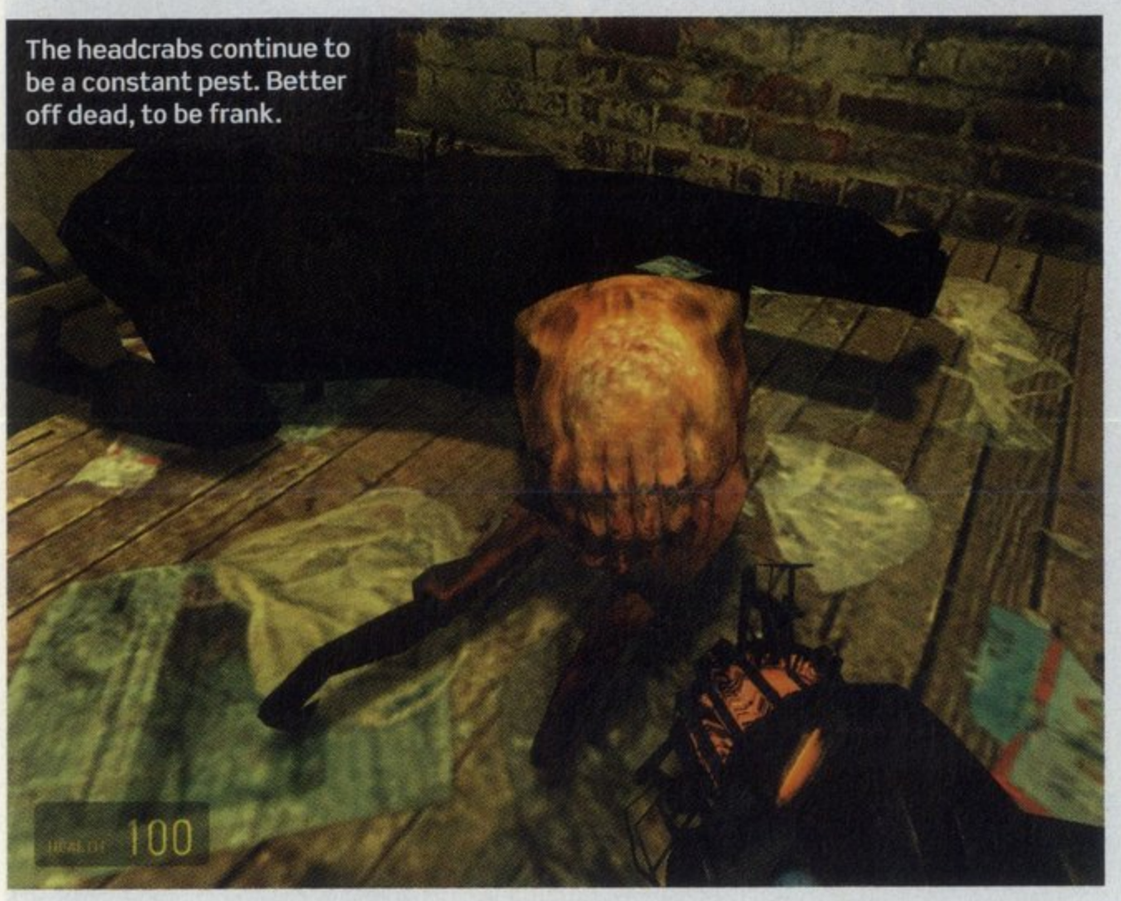
Basically just showing off the water effects, I think

Cross toxic sludge and face relentless attacks from the filthy oppressors in your airboat

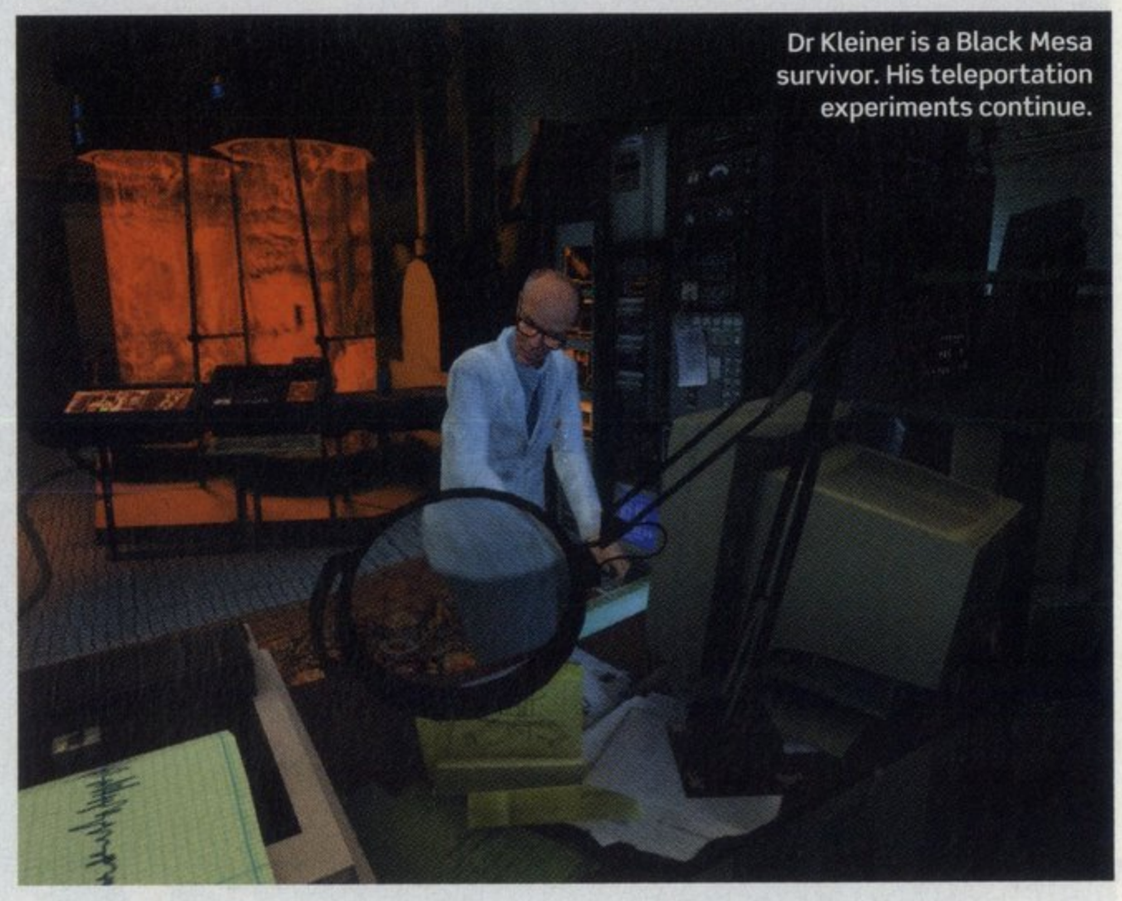
Airboat! That's not a very imaginative name for what should be called the Turbo Propeller Sled, or something. Anyway, Gordon makes a daring escape in one.

Dropships track you on your speedy craft and troops are placed on bridges to ambush you. Speed and firepower will see you through, as well as a few nifty big-air jumps.

The airboat faces many challenges, but none more dangerous than this unfriendly helicopter. Needless to say its rudeness did not go unpunished.



The headcrabs continue to be a constant pest. Better off dead, to be frank.



Dr Kleiner is a Black Mesa survivor. His teleportation experiments continue.

restriction was imposed, but it's nevertheless a little peculiar. The quality of the game meant that I was searching, rather desperately, for similar complaints. Smugly I assumed that my allies in a battle were non-human because that way Valve dodged the lack of realism and other problems created by fighting alongside human allies. Of course my lack of faith was exposed a few levels later, when I found myself in the midst of the war-torn city fighting alongside numerous human allies who patched me up, shouted at me to reload, apologised when they got in the way and fought valiantly against a vastly superior force. What a battle that was. I want to go back, right now. The striders, so impressive to behold, are the most fearsome of foes. Fighting both these behemoths and a constant flow of Combine troops creates what is without a doubt the most intense and exhilarating conflict ever undertaken in a videogame. The laser-pointer rocket launcher is back and even more satisfying than ever before. Rocket-crates give you a seemingly infinite resupply to battle these monsters but it's never straightforward. Striders will seek you out, forcing you under cover, while the whale-like flying gunships will shoot down your rockets, inducing you to resort to imaginative manoeuvring to perform that killing blow. Even dying becomes a pleasure – you want to see these beasts smash through walls and butcher the rebels, again and again. Oh Christ, what will happen next?

My lack of faith was exposed a few levels later

I could talk about how those battles with the striders almost made me cry, or about the events that Alyx guides you through so cleverly, so elegantly. I could talk about the twitchy fear instilled by your journey through an abandoned town, or the way that the skirmishes with Overwatch soldiers echo the battles against the marines in the original *Half-Life*. I want to rant and exult over this and that detail or event, this reference or that joke. I want to bemoan the fact that it had to end at all (no matter the excellence of that ending). And I'm distraught that we'll have to wait so long for an expansion pack or sequel. I even had this whole paragraph about how *CS Source* will be joined by an army of user-fashioned mods as the multiplayer offering for this definitively singleplayer game. But we're running out of space, out of time. There's so much here to talk about, but in truth I don't want to talk, I just want to get back to it: more, more, more... You have to experience it for yourself. This is the *one* unmissable game. It's time to get that cutting-edge PC system. Sell your grandmother, remortgage the cat, do whatever you have to do. Just don't miss out.

JIM ROSSIGNOL

PC GAMES ADDICT How can it possibly be this good?

IT'S › Astonishing › Robots! › Revelatory

IT'S NOT › Ever stupid › Corridors › The end of the story

Messianic

96%

■ **Release** Spring ■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Valve ■ **They say** 1.2GHz CPU, 256Mb, DX7 3D card, net connection ■ **We say** 2.4GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, DX9 3D card, net connection ■ **Multiplayer** No ■ **Link** www.valvesoftware.com ■ **Community** www.planethalflife.com ■ **Influenced by** Half-Life ■ **Alternatively** Call of Duty

WARHAMMER 40K DAWN OF WAR

In which you are cordially invited to wage future-war. Head-eating optional.

"Behiiiind yoooou..." A Chaos Lord, supported by the walking tank that is the Defiler. They make a potent melée combo.

Thumbnail Review

Tactical RTS based on Games Workshop's Warhammer 40,000

- ☑ Massive armies
- ☑ Loads of character
- ☑ Gigantic head-munching daemons
- ☒ Interracial harmony

An explosive RTS, packed with immensely detailed units who fight and die in the most spectacular manner possible.

STOMPY STOMPY!

Full metal jacket. Also: metal trousers and socks

Each army has a large mechanised unit, capable of laying down tons of fire and tearing things apart up close

Tough and deadly in close combat, the Killa Kan is the Ork answer to the dreadnought. Likely to shout "SOD OFF!" when ordered.

The Marine Dreadnought is a versatile, multi-role unit, providing either close combat or ranged support, depending on its upgrades.

The Eldar field mighty Wraithlords, which are adept at tearing apart vehicles and buildings in melée. Upgradeable with huge guns.

The heaviest mech-unit, the Chaos Defiler can match anything in melée, and sports a long-range artillery cannon.

A Marine Librarian and Commander, yesterday.

6961/+20
12/20
8855/+0
0/15
Build 54207.41047
Only infantry units are capable of capturing Strategic Points, as this Chaos Obliterator is doing. Turrets can be set up nearby to protect it from attack.
0/3 (0%)
Obliterator
Heavy Infantry
- Heavy Infantry.
- Powerful ranged combat unit that can switch between several ranged weapons.
- Slow movement speed.
- Can be teleported to any location when built.
Currently Selected
Squad Completed
Obliterator Squad
AI - Team 1

To date, nobody has made a great *Warhammer 40,000* game. How's that? Just look at the embarrassment of riches the potential developer has at its fingertips. A vast and detailed backstory. Ready-made combat units. Army structures on a plate. That's half the job done already. And what delights have we previously been served up? *Chaos Gate. Final Liberation. Rites of War. Fire Warrior.* Up until now, the 40K-on-PC pedigree has been rather more Chum than My Dog. Yet everyone who knows *40K* understands that it could make a great PC game. And even those who don't have probably heard enough about this squad-level game to realise there's a vast amount of potential crossover.

And here it is. *That 40K* game. The one that's always been upriver somewhere. And it hasn't just fulfilled our hopes, it's exceeded our eagerest expectations.

Few modern RTS games can hold a candle to *Dawn of War*. A bold statement, granted. And I'm not talking about the fact it's full of Space Marines and Daemons and all that other stuff that pleases the tabletop gamers among us. While *Dawn of War* interprets Games Workshop's sci-fi game with a high degree of accuracy, it's also an intelligent RTS that puts the focus of battle in all the right places: territorial gain; combined-arms combat; front-line scrums. What's more, it does so in a way that reflects the best elements of the best RTS games. It's as accessible and immediate as *Generals*, as frenetic and demanding as *Starcraft* and *Total Annihilation*, as multitudinous as *Medieval*, and as loaded with visual narrative as *Homeworld*.

Dawn of War is the Where's Wally of RTS. You can see that from the screenshots, and yes, this really is how the game looks. Once you've wound up your toy soldiers and sent them to war, it's impossible not to skim around the battlefield, watching the minutiae of unfolding conflicts. At the bottom of the ladder, you've got your Space Marine scouts fighting hand-to-hand with Orks. Meleé is an impressive sight itself, as each side has its own style of fighting and combat animations; slashes, stabs, parries and final cuts. Pan around, and you might see a Dreadnought slugging it out with a Chaos Defiler as the troops surge all around. Sparks fly and casings clank as the towering constructs pummel each other with electrified weapons. Artillery hurls whole units skyward like clods of earth, leaving any survivors to drag themselves out of the steaming craters and return to the fray. A 20-foot daemon strides across the battlefield, playing man-hockey with his axe, and gnawing the heads off troops like blood-filled jelly babies. The experience is accented by a sense of juddering impact as the missiles strike and the shrapnel flies. This is mainly due to a blend of camera shake, particle effects and explosive lighting as mass turns critical, but sound effects are also important. There's a solid sense of the physical, as chainswords idle and growl, rapid-firing weapons vomit countless liquid rounds, and armoured hulls clank and rattle ▶

A 20-foot daemon strides across the battlefield

ON THE DVD The carnage of *Dawn of War* has to be felt to be believed. Enter the frey > Demos

WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR

A Warp Spider Exarch leads his squad.

Design your own paint scheme. Mmm, green.

Scrumming it up, a squad of assault Marines gets to grips with some marauding Orks. Hear those chainswords buzz.

in reply. It's a remarkable scene, and the temptation to spectate at the expense of army management is all-too compelling.

Moreover, the spectacular action is not as hardware-sapping as the tableaux adorning these pages might suggest. You won't need a Radeon X800 to run this game, for unlike many modern games, *Dawn of War*'s engine leans a little more on your CPU than your 3D card. Of course, a 16 pixel-pipe wallet-ripper is going to make any game sizzle, but performance-wise, we found a P4 2.4 with half a gig of RAM and a Radeon 9700 more than adequate.

Beneath the characterisation and endless animation there's a balanced, coherent and solid RTS. Resource management comes in the form of strategic points. Once captured, these provide a drip-feed of requisition points which are spent on new troops and structures. Strategic points also represent territorial gain, and so the conflict tends to focus upon these critical areas, adding to the sense of desperate struggle. The big battles tend to take place out in the field, and it's not until you've severely depleted an enemy and snatched the resources that you can start making headway towards his base for the last crack. The other resource is power, which comes into play when you begin building vehicles. Power is produced by generators at your base and, if anything, limits your abilities to build up massive tank armies. You have to be picky about what you spend power on, and that keeps the game balanced.

Combat is divided into two categories: ranged and melee, and noting the distinction between the two is vital. For example, if a unit of Space Marines toting heavy weapons is giving you grief, it's wise to engage them in melee, as this neutralises the threat from their guns. Some troops are custom-built for this, as they utilise jump-packs to leap into the fray, making swift flanking strikes a useful threat-elimination tactic. Likewise, concentrating fire on hand-to-hand specialists as they charge is a key counter-tactic. And while the spectacular ranged weapons grab the headlines, many battles are brutally concluded with knives, swords, power-fists and giant demonic axes. In fact, the most impressive clashes occur in close combat, as each distinct unit-type has its own series of animations and finishing moves. Generally speaking, the larger the unit, the more animations it has. And the really monstrous fellows that lurk at the top of the tech tree, such as the Eldar Avatar and the gigantic Ork Squiggoth, are pure pleasure to behold as they rampage across the battlefield, bowling troops over like nine-pins and wreaking the kind of havoc you just won't see in any other RTS. ▶

Gnawing heads off troops like jelly babies

DAEMON SPAWN!

Ritual de lo habitual

You don't just summon a daemon; you must select one of your aspiring champions as a host for it. Unfortunately for this champion, birth is a far from painless experience...

The poor tortured squad leader is lifted into the air as the energies of chaos swirl around him. Not the sort of thing a couple of Nurofen are going to deal with.

"Whoops, mind your backs..."

STRIDER When you're this tall, you need to crouch to fight your enemies. A Wraithlord's huge hands can knock squads flying however, so if you want to increase the spectacle (as well as your chances of success, it's worth ordering a few in.

CHOPPY Upgrading units with more powerful weapons, like this Warlock and his twin-bladed executioner, is done on the fly. After you've built a unit and researched the relevant options in the tech tree, you apply upgrades to existing models. Similarly, squad numbers are increased *after* the squad has been ordered in, enabling you to get things moving quickly.

PYROTECHNICS We all like a big explosion, and *Dawn of War* is a veritable light show. This particular conflagration is caused by the Eldar Prism Cannon, fired from the turret of a grav-tank. While many heavy weapons tend to affect specific kinds of targets, this is one of the few that can melt troops, vehicles and buildings with equal ease.

CLICKY The GUI is packed with features. You can attach leaders to units, locate your builders, camera-track specific units, and of course, relay all unit orders. Units have two stance options, based on territorial aggressiveness and choice of weapons. Moreover, these orders can be given to your unit-production buildings, so you can pre-configure a unit's stance before it's built.

Our man is torn asunder in a cloud of tissue, his tattered remains forming a rift for the emerging daemon. Who would have thought there could be so much blood?

And off he toddles, to bite off the heads of the mortal masses. When idle, the Bloodthirster loses health, to represent his instability in our corporeal dimension.

WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR

Like *Warcraft III*, character units play a large part in the ebb and flow of battle. Commanders tend to be deadly in melee, and they're tough as old moon boots, so deploying them at the right time can make all the difference. Many leaders boast special abilities, such as the psychic Eldar Farseer, who can be upgraded with a number of devastating psionic powers designed to damage and disrupt enemy forces.

There are two other key factors to exploit in combat: morale and cover. Different units have different levels of morale, and if they lose enough of their number, they'll break. Breaking doesn't mean running away though – it's up to you whether you retreat a broken unit, and they'll actually get a speed boost if you do, to represent their bottling it. Keep them in the fray however, and they'll fight at seriously reduced capacity, reflecting their broken spirits. Certain weapons, such as sniper rifles and flamethrowers, break morale swiftly, which can prove invaluable in front-line assaults. Cover, which comes in light and heavy flavours, does exactly what it is supposed to, providing your troops with defensive bonuses when they're in it. Very handy for by-sections advances, and defending key areas.

Slow-moving heavy infantry units are ideal for defending structures and strategic points.

The game is divided into three modes of play: the singleplayer campaign, skirmish vs CPU games, and online multiplay. Those hoping for a campaign for each of the four races involved (Space Marines, Chaos, Eldar and Orks) will be disappointed, for there's only the one, playing as the Blood Ravens chapter of the Space Marines. During the campaign, you'll contact the other three races and you'll also briefly control a few units of Imperial Guardsmen – the human militia of the Warhammer 40,000 universe. The missions are enjoyable and well-paced, throwing increasingly heavy challenges at you, then slackening off to give you a chance to play with the new toys in the Marine tech-tree, before launching into the later, more complex operations. Throughout its course, the campaign introduces you to every unit in the game, and very much reflects the tenets of the 40K universe, dealing as it does with racial manipulation, daemonic possession, betrayal and ceaseless conflict. It's also a good introduction to what is really the

Man jam! Every unit has a series of different attack moves, which imbue the fights with variety and a sense of genuine struggle.

An Ork Killa Kan enjoys freshly squeezed marine.

heart of the *Dawn of War* experience: multiplayer matches. By then you're thoroughly schooled in base building, resource acquisition and combat with a wide variety of units. Naturally, the latter applies only to the Space Marine forces; learning to use the other races is up to you, and player-vs-CPU skirmishes are naturally the best place to broaden your horizons.

Just like in the table-top game, most players will get to grips with the Marines first. You play them, in the campaign, but they're also the most accessible race, and therefore the most forgiving to the beginner. They field tough troops and vehicles, and are good, safe all-rounders. Chaos, the eternal enemies of the Marines (and pretty much everyone else), field some similar units to the Marines, but there's a distinctly daemonic bent to their forces. Their nastier troops get a wide variety of savage melee upgrades, and daemons get a look-in, most notably the immense, horned, axe-wielding Bloodthirster daemon.

The Orks are different again. Their strength lies in their numbers, and as you mass their ranks, their more advanced units become available. This reliance on population to dominate is reflected by the army's Waaagh! Rating, and the higher this is, the higher the Orks' morale is. Get enough Orks on the battlefield, and their spirit is virtually unbreakable.

Which leaves us with the Eldar. They're probably the trickiest race to play, owing to the fact that their tech-tree can be pushed in many different directions, but they're potentially the most rewarding as they field advanced weaponry and a devastating array of psychic powers. Brittle and fast-moving, their attacks must be co-ordinated swiftly and efficiently. However, if used well, they're capable of reducing an enemy's forces in a very short space of time.

And once you've got the hang of an army, it's off to the multiplayer servers you go. Online play is the greatest test of your abilities, and the four finely-balanced and versatile armies can make for some titanic, sweaty struggles. There are many optional victory conditions, our favourite being timed territorial advantage games, in which you (or your team) must hold more strategic points than your opponent(s) for the course of the game. You'll see bitter fighting over certain strategic points, and success demands that you're fluid with your approach – both reacting to the enemy's posture and snatching strategic points where you can while his attention is elsewhere.

If you know your 40K, you'll get a head start in *Dawn of War*, as you'll know that a lascannon is the perfect anti-vehicle weapon, for example. And for those in this category, you'll love the faithful and vivid reproduction of 40K units, and the way they're brought kicking and screaming to life. For those who aren't interested in tin soldiers – you'd be nuts to miss the finest sci-fi RTS to hit the PC since *Total Annihilation*.

AL BICKHAM

BIG CHEESE

Leading from the front

Every army needs leaders. Just remember, size isn't everything...

The Marine Librarian is a powerful psyker, capable of wiping out whole units in a single mental blast. Pretty handy in a scrap, too.

The Eldar Avatar is a living god, and strides across the battlefield apace. He's a melee monster, and very effective against vehicles.

With his giant swiss-army knife attachment, the Orky Big Mek can carve through both troops and vehicles hulls with ease.

PC GAMES ADDICT Frenetic, intelligent carnage

IT'S ›Hugely immersive ›Carnage ›A wicked multiplayer game

IT'S NOT ›Just for 40K fans ›Over too soon ›A big single player experience

Thunderous

91%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** THQ ■ **Developer** Relic ■ **They say** PIII 1GHz, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** P4 2.4GHz, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** LAN, internet ■ **Link** www.dawnofwargame.com ■ **Influenced by** Warcraft III, Total Annihilation, BF 1942 ■ **Alternatively** Ground Control II

EVIL GENIUS

No one lives forever – especially in *my* lair

PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★

Thumbnail Review

Build an evil base, hatch evil plans, lose all your hair

- ☑ Scheme
- ☑ Torture
- ☑ Terminate
- ☒ Help old ladies across the road

Plotting, scheming and defeating the forces of good isn't as easy as you think, but there's masses of fun to be had trying.

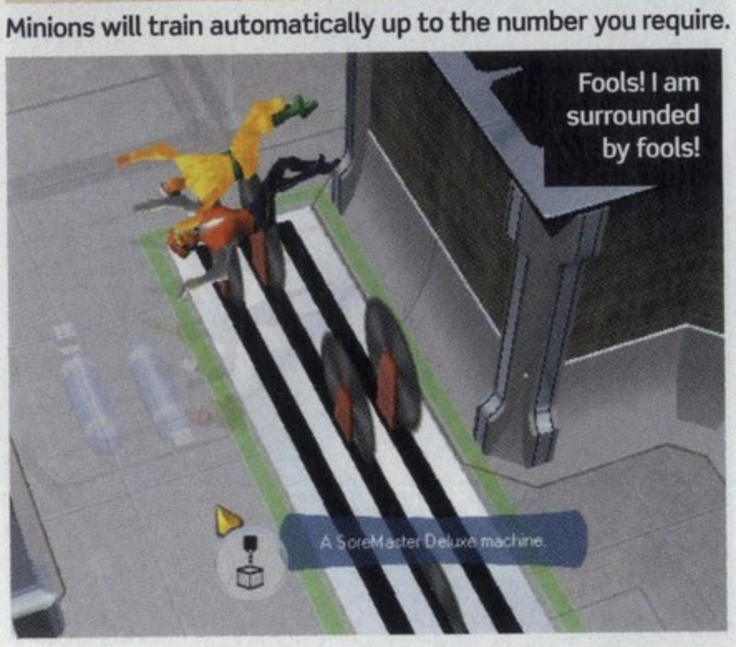
Scientific equipment can be used to research new items, but it's much more fun to torture enemy agents in it.

Tim shows plenty of promise. It takes a certain kind of man to lock a friend in a cupboard and starve him for the good of the collective. And while he's not quite in the 'Genius' bracket just yet, he's showing the sort of spirit that'll take him a long way in the world of evil. He'll have to work on a decent maniacal laugh, though – that chirpy chuckle of his will just have to go.

It also takes a certain kind of man to find the evil angle in a game as humane as *The Sims 2*, so God knows what he'd get up to in Elixir's sado-sim *Evil Genius* – a game which successfully combines 'anger' with 'management'. As the titular crackpot plotter, your goal is world domination, what else? This foul end is achieved by recruiting minions and henchmen; constructing lairs; researching a Doomsday device and battling do-gooder agents. Evil is good, and that moral reversal is as refreshing now as when Bullfrog gave us *Dungeon Keeper* to cackle over.

There are also echoes of Elixir's previous game in the political machinations and clear goals laid before you. But after a remarkably speedy development cycle in comparison to *Republic*'s protracted birth, do we have the right to hope for a Dr No – or

Minions will train automatically up to the number you require.



should we fear a Casino Royale?

The best news is that *Evil Genius* is a more coherent, tighter and more manageable offering than *Republic*. Its beautifully streamlined concept is easy to grasp: "Be Dr Evil", as Elixir would have it, and our imaginations do the rest. The most striking and pleasantly surprising aspect of the opening minutes is that *everything* in the game – menus, animations, descriptive text, tooltips, missions, enemies, minions, henchmen, traps, even the most mundane items you plonk in your base – adhere to a very strong and specific sense of style. And while the Austin Powers movies are the most obvious reference, *Evil Genius* goes further, with a consistently caricatured, exaggerated '60s atmosphere and a very British sense of humour which takes apart motifs from spy film and fiction for its own nefarious purposes. Within the gaming world, the extravagant stylings of *No One Lives Forever* are another obvious touchstone.

It's a simple and appealing premise, but one with meaty implications. Foremost, although you're represented by one of three criminal masterminds, your choice of avatar is largely cosmetic. The evil genius is a figurehead, relying on minions and henchmen to get the dirty work done. Around the base, underlings do the business of construction, carting stuff around and repelling enemies. The evil genius can only encourage them by their presence (and the occasional motiveless slaying of a hapless minion).

GOON SHOW

Attack, my minions!

Because a scheming mastermind can't do it all

The Worker is the most common minion, dressed in the classic jumpsuit and hard hat.

Biochemists are able to plot and research. This one's tired, and wants to play ping-pong.

Red Ivan: a handy Henchman to have around, when you need a mad Ruskie with a bazooka.

John Steele: toughest, suavest of all Super Agents. Unchecked, he'll destroy your plans.

The first half of the game allows you to make a few mistakes as you construct your first secret underground lair and hatch plans for world domination. Then it's on to the second island where a larger base – and, ultimately, your doomsday device and customary rocket – can be constructed beneath a dormant volcano. More than a dozen room types, several specific placeables for each, training more powerful minions, researching new items, setting up security... there'a a lot to learn in the opening stages.

> ...And the occasional motiveless slaying

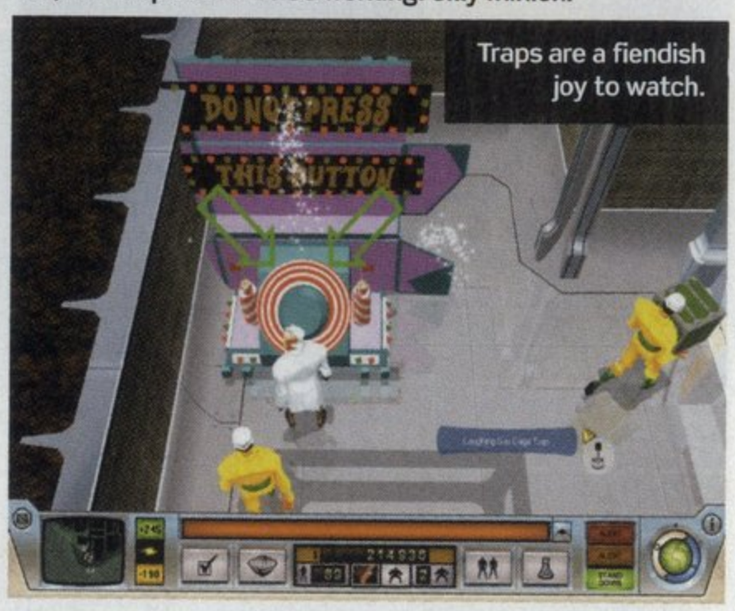
It won't take long, though, before your activities are noticed by patrolling agents and holidaymakers looking for a sunny vacation on your desert isle. *Evil Genius* fleshes out your connection with the outside world via a global map, divided up into 20 regions under the aegis of five spy agencies. You can send out individual minions and henchmen to specific regions for the purposes of stealing (your main source of cash); plotting (uncovering Acts of Infamy); and actually carrying out specific missions. Any action will attract attention, raising one of the game's key factors: heat. Wreaking havoc across S.M.A.S.H. territories will send that agency's heat rating rocketing. In retaliation, they'll send groups of prying agents, thieves, burglars, soldiers and even Super Agents to poke around your base. But generating heat is all in a day's work for an evil genius. Stealing money and carrying out Acts of Infamy across the world are the only ways to progress and meet your main objectives, such as gaining a high 'notoriety' reputation. After all, what's the point of being an evil genius if no-one else knows?

The distinction between minions and henchmen is crucial. Minions are expendable (a handy qualification to have in an *Evil Genius* employee). The lowest level minion is the worker, which are recruited automatically, depending on your population limit. Workers can then be trained up into more powerful and specialised baddies. First by capturing a higher-class minion, then torturing them to extract their secrets, and finally building and using class-specific training installations. ▶

EVIL GENIUS

Social minions can eventually become either persuasive Diplomats or smarmy Playboys.

Yes, this trap seems to be working. Silly minion.



Traps are a fiendish joy to watch.

Henchmen are a different sharkpool of evil fish altogether. Each of the 12 must be specially recruited and they possess unique abilities that are only unlocked through experience. Think Jaws, Oddjob or – er – Fat Bastard. Each is deliciously individual, with characteristic spoken responses and animations. Henchmen are powerful and precious. You can only have a few at a time, and the total depends on your notoriety rating. They're toughness makes them an essential part of base defence and, if they're defeated by sheer weight of numbers, they are knocked out rather than killed. But a proper evil-mastermind-versus-spies setting requires an arch-nemesis and it's the Super Agents who'll prove the biggest thorn in your side. If a henchmen is knocked out by a Super Agent, he'll lose one of three lives. Lose the lot, and he's gone for good. Should the worst happen and a Super Agent is able to confront your defenceless genius, then it's game over.

No time to stroke the cat and admire your work

The five would-be 007s (one from each agency) will show up on your island if your dastardly deeds have generated too much heat in their territory. While ordinary agents can be easily killed, captured or distracted, Super Agents are initially invulnerable and very hard to get rid of. Though you can limit their appearances by strategically placing social agents to reduce heat, the Supers are still too much of a pain, adding another problem to your already stacked 'evil to do' list. Indeed, the means to permanently liquidate them only becomes apparent near the very end of the game, and it's just an optional objective anyway.

But while there's no rest for the wicked, the designers have cleverly prevented the game from degenerating into an aimless sandbox in which you just expand your base and whack out a few agents when the mood takes you. Ten multi-part main objectives and the constant demands of money and nosy agents keep the pressure firmly on. But the balance isn't smoothly maintained and at times it feels like there's *too much* pressure. Unless you opt for the fairly facile 'easy' mode, there isn't enough time to really enjoy the wide variety of objects in your base; to watch the fantastic animations as your underlings carry out their orders and relax around your base, or tinker with the devious and often hilarious traps. Perhaps super villains aren't meant to relax but a Catch-22 situation can rear its head. You need minions to defend

DASTARDLY DEEDS

See no evil? You're just not trying hard enough

Spreading your tentacles of terror needn't be a chore. Mischievous machinations can be fun!

The World Domination map shows the 20 regions and areas of enemy agency influence. Each star is an available mission, and clicking on the region lets you send minions to it.

Once your men are in place, start the timer on their mission while you turn your attention back to the base. If all goes well, eventually you'll see this message and reap the rewards.

In this case, the mission was to lure a specific mercenary scientist to my side. Some 'liberated' personalities still require torturing before they'll work for you. Tsk.

"That's *Miss* Evil to you..."

IN CONTROL Build and man these control stations to reveal information about the outside world. Away teams can then act on that info, raising cash and your notoriety rating.
VOODOO ROLLER Montezuma, a frightening Witch Doctor with eldritch powers, is one of the available henchmen. Hmm... wonder where they got the idea for him from?
BUFFED UP After a certain level of notoriety is reached, you'll attract a 'bodyguard'. Originally called 'playthings', they're not much cop, but make the place look pretty.
STYLE GURU Even incidental information is relayed with humour and an arch sense of style.
A lady megalomaniac criminal mastermind.
SCHEME QUEEN The alluring Alexis is one of three master-minds you can opt for. She has increased influence over minions (indicated by the purple highlight), not to mention a deeply sexy voice.
BARGAIN HUNT Items such as the Ark of the Covenant can be stolen from the world map and transferred to your base. In addition to raising your profile, they confer bonuses to minions who'll gather to admire it.
EVIL GENIUS
Alexis
100
100
100
100
100
Humming in an evil and sinister manner.
STATUS
+245
-194
$ 166498
87
2
ALERT
ALERT
STAND DOWN

your base, but withdrawing them from the world map saps your income and reduces expansion to fist-clenching levels.

It's as though Elixir just couldn't stop coming up with great ideas – hardly surprising, given the exciting premise – and couldn't resist adding them. For example, every minion, henchman, agent and tourist has five statistics: health, loyalty, smarts, attention and endurance. Lowering each has a different effect: a minion with low loyalty will defect, an agent with reduced attention will wander around stupidly and fail to report what he's seen, and so on. You can replenish your minions' stats with various items in your base, and lower intruders' with specific traps or minions' abilities. At its most difficult, *Evil Genius* requires you to pay attention to such individual strengths and weaknesses, while simultaneously dealing with the rest of the game's complexities.

While a 'tag' function marks invaders to be dealt with by your minions, there's always something urgent to do – and hence you're never in a position to sit back in your sinister armchair, stroke the cat and admire your handiwork. And then there's those damn tourists. You have to build hotels for them (ostensibly as cover for your evildoing) but it's an underexplored and unnecessary addition to a workload that would have benefitted from more automation, and is one of the niggles that narrowly denies this otherwise entertaining game true 'genius' status.

But anyone who enjoys constant challenge (the gaming equivalent of juggling with chainsaws) will find much to love in *Evil Genius*. The majority of the game's features function extremely well and the theme is rock-solid throughout. Crucially, the game never drops the act. Not once does it crack a mocking grin that would break the cartoon magic, but it is filled with the sort of humour and pleasing details that other developers will wishing they'd thought of first.

So should you leave it on the shelf, as you did with *Republic*?

Why no, Mr Bond. I expect you to buy.

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMES ADDICT Evil has its own rewards

IT'S ideas
› Stylish › Crammed with good › Brosnan rather than Connery

IT'S NOT
› A sandbox › Easy being evil › Quite a work of genius

Moore-ish

87%

■ **Release** October 14 ■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Elixir ■ **They say** PIII 800, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 1.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.howevilareyou.com ■ **Community** www.evilplanet.com ■ **Influenced by** Dungeon Keeper, Austin Powers, Roger Moore's eyebrow ■ **Alternatively** Dungeon Keeper 2

Replays look as spectacular as ever.

David Beckham's revenge fantasies came true at last. Free kicks now use a natty, stop/start power bar.

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

FIFA 2005

Reports of *FIFA*'s demise have been somewhat exaggerated

Any soccer fans who follow the English Premiere League will remember that wonder goal Dennis Bergkamp scored a couple of seasons ago that is replayed in so many 'best goals' specials. The one where he had his back to goal and a defender right behind him? Yes, no? Okay, well, in taking a pass, he flicked the ball around one side of the poor centre half, span around the other, and then blasted it into the net. I've just done the same thing in *FIFA 2005*.

Thumbnail Review

It's a revamped *FIFA* with a fluid new control feature

- ☑ Flick balls
- ☑ Nutmeg defenders
- ☑ Play like Arsenal
- ☒ Pay like Arsenal

EA's flagship footie sim gilds its lily with a refined first touch facility and gargantuan 15 season solo mode. Put in a bid.

Obviously, I'm not saying I'm a footballing genius like Bergkamp, but it's a sign that your stalwart correspondent is starting to grasp the potential of *FIFA 2005*'s all-new First Touch controls.

Yes, yes, we've been here before, particularly with last year's 'Off the Ball' feature. New *FIFA* equals new gimmicky doohickey, forcing the faithful to buy the latest edition, while further straining the already overburdened controls. ("To execute the new Overhead Shimmy™, simply tap 'A', pull down on the stick, hold shoulder button '3' and perform a triple salko with one and a half twist and dismount.") The trouble with many of these, ahem, *innovations*, is that they've often been ineffective and unreliable. Far from augmenting the proceedings, their presence has only served to highlight some basic flaws – open play in thrall to animation and an inflexible AI that resulted in all too familiar games, season after season. Predictable in a very bad way.

It's a joy to discover what you can do

The good news is that *FIFA 2005* has not only addressed some of these perennial concerns – which we'll get to shortly – but this First Touch doobrie is an elegant addition that integrates so neatly, it already feels a natural part of the genre's control set. Provided you have the essential dual analogue, PlayStation 2-style pad, a move on the right stick anticipating a pass will translate into a chest down, a flick, a trap or a touch on, in whatever direction you choose. It's instinctive, it works, and it's a joy to discover just what you can do with it.

Now, the main reason why First Touch works is because EA Sports Canada have at last overhauled *FIFA*'s animation. Gone are the infuriating routines that kicked in whenever you took possession of a ball or tried to correct a mistaken button press. Instead, there's a far more responsive, but no less attractive, system that brings a welcome fluidity to matches. It gives counter attacks a swift, devastating character, freshens

HOORAY HENRY

A great piece of Arsenal

Don the boots of the mercurial Frenchman and mesmerising play can be yours

Reyes can slot a ball through to Henry easily enough, but can even the great Thierry beat no less than five Cardiff defenders?

Ooh-er, it looks tricky for a moment, but a quick swivel in advance of the ball reaching Henry is all it takes to flip the ball past his marker...

...while a surge of shoulder button speed takes him between the last two defenders and into the box. You had to be there, really.

TAKEN APART

An entourage of options...

REMOTE CONTROL An old-fashioned punt upfield could find one of those distant forwards, but for more precision, you could use the Remote Receiver function. Hit the top right shoulder button and you'll be given a choice of three players to pass directly to.

YOU'RE THROUGH A shoulder-button activated through-pass is one of the quickest ways to shift a ball without sacrificing accuracy. It'll seek to ignore the most immediate option and try to thread a ball to an advanced player, bypassing any markers.

CLOSING DOWN Standard operational procedure for the opposition in *FIFA 2005* is to close down the man in possession, with players looking to block forward and cross-field passes. The trick is to tease them out of position and work gaps for your players to run into.

TURN AND BURN One option for that right back is a short pass to the bloke in front of him. When the ball's on its way, you can use First Touch – pushing the right analogue stick left will make your player chest or kick the ball into the space next to him, duping the pursuing Blackburn (blue/white) player.

that old challenge at the heart of the *FIFA*s – that of finding an open man to pass to – and lends a gratifying immediacy to matches.

A beefed-up career mode proves a major step forward as well. It's a 15-year odyssey, where you have to work your way up as a manager, starting off at lower league clubs, then earning yourself better job offers by gaining promotions, titles and trophies. There's a transfer market and some sort of club infrastructure to administer too, but they're not as convincing, using arbitrary points systems rather than cold, hard, realistic cash. Your job security meter doesn't seem too fair either – with the Premier League title already in the bag, a meaningless defeat cost my Portsmouth gaffer a whopping 10% off his meter. These criticisms aside, though, the career mode is a major step forward for the solo player.

There are also certain hangovers from *FIFA*'s past, as you might expect. The 'Off the Ball' functions have apparently been refined, but just the same, simple passes to a remote receiver aside, they remain as tricky to pull off as ever. Corners are still an irritating pseudo mini-game but at least free kicks have been improved. The other major holdover is the AI, which still plays a disciplined, pressing game on the higher levels. Mistakes are few and far between and while this does make you work for your goals, it can also give games a grinding, obstinate feel. Thankfully, the more fleet attacking options now at your disposal give you the chance to light up an otherwise dull match with a brilliant flash of inspiration, putting skill rightfully at a premium.

Faster and far more graceful than ever before, *FIFA 2005* plays a beautiful game. Its rewarding career mode outdoes *Pro Evo Soccer*'s more abstract Master League, while the basics have enough instinctive flair to give two-player match-ups a thrilling range. *FIFA 2005* is a confident, convincing response to *Pro Evo*'s superlative challenge, the First Touch feature alone assuring it a place in the canon. So, EA have scored first; what will Konami reply with?

CHRIS BUXTON

PC GAMES ADDICT The soccer-sim war is back on

IT'S › Fast › Wonderfully intuitive › A social life sapper

IT'S NOT › Just another FIFA › Lacking AI › Any better at corners

Touching

89%

■ **Release** October 15 ■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** 800MHz CPU, 256Mb, GeForce/Radeon 7000 ■ **We say** 2.4Ghz CPU, 512Mb, GeForce FX 5700/Radeon 9600 ■ **Multiplayer** Two player, online ■ **Link** www.fifa2005.ea.com ■ **Influenced by** The FIFA series, the ISS/Pro Evo series ■ **Alternatively** Pro Evo Soccer 3

Troops are hardened with commie propaganda. Bullets and whisky come later.
Comrades! Check your weapons and harden your hearts! We must stand our ground and drive the fascists out of the Motherland!
Mosin-Nagant

Thumbnail Review

Expansion pack to last year's majestic WWII FPS

- ☑ Huge battles
- ☑ Big explosions
- ☑ Death on all sides
- ☒ Time for a brew

A brutal experience. Fight as an ordinary soldier, in the most extraordinary battles. But *UO* doesn't match the mighty *Call of Duty*.

CALL OF DUTY UNITED OFFENSIVE

We shall fight them on our beech desks, our pine stools and our 17"s

Welcome back to *Call of Duty*. The Allies have missed you. If this expansion pack has one thing over the original shooter, it's pure scale. Through the four campaigns, and eight hours worth of playtime, there's barely a moment's peace, a second to take in the enormity of it all. You jump from crisis to last-ditch defence, through to suicidal assault and terrifying forward march, one man in a whole world of hurt. *United Offensive* always attempts to out-spectacular the original, but rarely matches its style.

An example: your squad has routed the Germans from a town hall. You're ordered to take up positions at the windows, defending it from attack. Dozens of tanks and troopers assault your position, clambering through the blown-out walls and kicking in the front door. But it drags on, and on, five, ten minutes of constant shooting. By the end, you're exhausted simply by the repetition. You've ran through the same corridors, shot hundreds of cloned Nazis, delivered explosives to tens of identical tanks. It still feels intense, but basically because of the endurance, not a moment.

Later, in the Eastern European campaign, Germany and the Soviets enter a war of attrition, piling man-power forward. You're funnelled into tight streets, forced to dash from cover to cover, stepping over the bodies of the fallen. As you go, snipers and machine gun fire randomly clip at your health. Surviving this horrific situation isn't down to your skill with a bolt-action rifle. It comes down to your use of the quicksave and quickload key. At that point, when you realise you can't beat the game without trial and error, or a very lucky run, *UO* stops being nearly as fun.

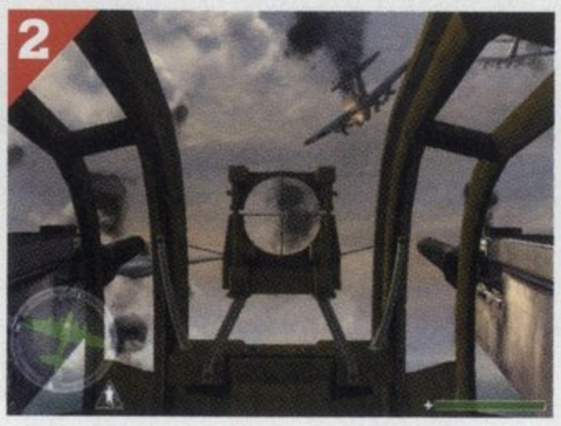
It's not all bad though, the early American missions are mostly excellent, tapping into that vein of stupid heroism that made *Call of Duty* so touching. Sergeant Moody from the original game is on hand to show you how it's done. He runs toward the enemy lines to lob smoke grenades, highlighting their position for

INSIGHT

A world-wide war

United Offensive is a history and geography lesson, taking you all over Europe. Here's the guided tour...

At Foy, your platoon is ordered to capture a vital crossroads by torchlight. A pity then, that the Germans are waiting.



Claustrophobics beware: one mission traps you inside a rickety B29 bomber as it's shot to pieces above the skies of Holland.

A Sicillian fortress houses three artillery guns, threatening Allied shipping. You need to sneak inside and disable them.

Russian infantry are transported to Kursk to defend against the Axis armour. The barrages you witness are astonishing.

TAKEN APART

"You know our motto: we deliver."

TECH TREE One of the new technological additions is this billowing smoke. It's used to great effect in Kursk – when you enter buildings the fumes rise to block out the ceiling.
HIGH FLYER The Air Force comes to your rescue, dropping every possible piece of ordnance into the tree-line, demolishing the German advance.
SMOKE SIGNALS God bless Sarge. As the tanks close in, he braves the machine gun nests and snipers to throw this smoke grenade into the hills. Your job is to provide covering fire. And to cower in the face of such bravery.
HIGH FIVE When the bomblets land, the entire platoon rushes out of their positions to take a look, whooping and cheering. Hurrah for air superiority.
JUNKYARD WAR Before the flyboys arrive, you're sent from foxhole to foxhole, lugging bazookas to the front-line, defending your wretched comrades from the advancing tanks.
1 | 59

bombing runs. It's an odd sensation, to be inspired by a polygonal bloke.

The British experience is mixed. The opener is as novel as it is spectacular you play as the gofer in a B29 bomber. Moving from gun to gun, you attempt to fend off the hordes of Me-109 fighters that keep coming in waves.. It's 'Memphis Hell' - first the engines catch fire, then the gunners start being taken out. You scurry from position to position, catching glimpses of the planes spinning loops around your bomber. The first time you play, and inevitably get shot to ribbons, it's wonderful. The fourth or fifth attempt… Urgh!

Later, you join the SAS in a Guns of Navarone skit, bombing a lighthouse and a couple of artillery pieces. It all goes a little Indiana Jones as you make your escape in a motorbike and sidecar. The trouble is, when you hop into any vehicle, the game falls apart. The scripted sequences, where you're the passenger firing wildly at truckloads of German soldiers feel stunted.

Meanwhile, the one section where you're placed at the controls of a Russian T-34 is utterly atrocious.Even the climax, based upon the Battle of Kursk, the largest armoured battle in history is ineptly handled.

When the original arrived, the experience it offered was special and new. Through a glut of endless WWII-themed games, it offered something different. Specifically, a chance to revel in an ordinary kind of heroism – heroism that was evoked by such a vivid, visceral sense of being in the thick of it, and surviving amidst so much loss of life.

UO's single player campaign offers nothing to top that sense of elation because purpose. It's good, but it's still a let down in comparison to the original. Fortunately the multiplayer improvements in *UO* add loads to *CoD's* slim offerings, the thing that really matters to the community. We'll touch on them more in a Long Play soon, but one of the three new modes, 'Domination' plays like *BF: 1942*, with spawn areas to take, larger maps and vehicles to drive. Original? Perhaps not, but it's what the *CoD* fans needed. Had this mode have been there from the start, more of the *BF:1942* crowd may have been converted.

DAN TOOSE

PC GAMES ADDICT **Explosive drama that lacks character**

IT'S › Heroic › Airborne › A useful stopgap for *CoD 2*

IT'S NOT › Inspiring › Lengthy › *Call of Duty*

Veteran

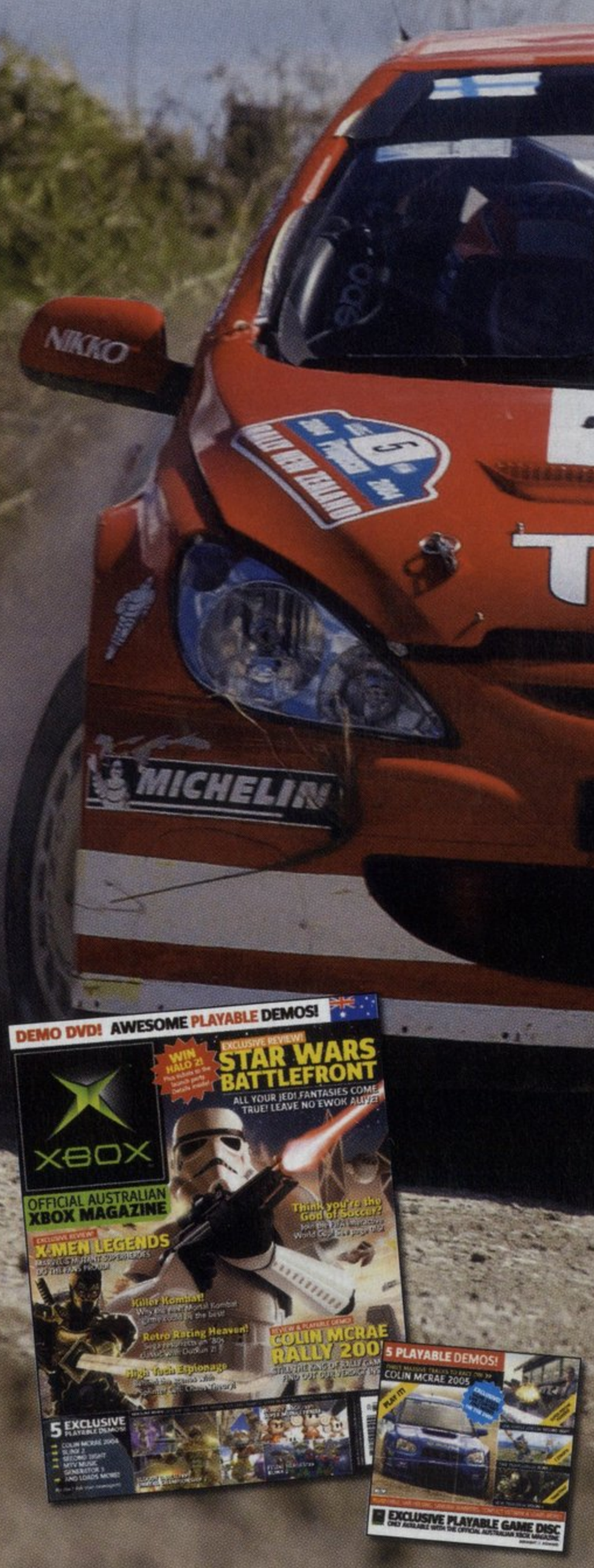
82%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Grey Matter ■ **They say** 600MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 3D card ■ **We say** 2Ghz CPU, 1 Gig RAM, 128Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, 2-64 players ■ **Link** www.callofduty.com ■ **Community** www.callofduty.org ■ **Influenced by** Band of Brothers, tales of heroism, Call of Duty ■ **Alternatively** Enemy Territory

YOU CAN NEVER TELL WHO PLAYS GAMES THESE DAYS.

That last corner was just like Colin McRae 4!

Yes, but I think the traction is more realistic in Richard Burns Rally.



IN STORES NOW!

THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE
AVAILABLE MONTHLY WITH A *PLAYABLE* DEMO DISC.

XBOX
OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005

It's completely changed! The car on the box is blue

No, it still looks stupid.

Detail is up, damage is lush

Dakar buggies are amusing diversions.

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

So, while feeding my fat cynicism, I typed 'déjà vu' and the spellchecker corrected it to 'Colin McRae Rally'. Whoa! That happened last year, too. *CMR 2005* is fantastic, but whether you care will almost certainly correlate with how many *Colin*s you've bought before.

CMR 2005 is resolutely open and varied, so much so the traditional championship is almost a sideshow. A career mode sees you working from humble machinery to the fastest and finest, through a blizzard of cups, shields and performance-enhancing parts tests. There's hours of play. Months. Orbits. A new German event and 13 more cars helps, of course, and all 330 stages are fresh – even though you may recognise certain bits. What doesn't help is that the driving remains the same. True, Codemasters claim to have sped the game up, but beyond perhaps a greater eagerness in the lower gears, I really can't tell. Going back to *CMR04* reveals all manner of detail changes, but while *04* may not look quite as shiny, driving it is exactly the same. New tracks would usually help, but you aren't learning them. You're listening to notes, and a three left is a three left. Will you notice the new trees?

Actually, a three left could be a two and you might get a good look at those trees. Nicky Grist's notes have gained detail, but leave you surprised more than *04* used to. Still, if you're good at any other *Colin* you can jump straight in here and murder everyone. Raise the difficulty if you want more competition.

Ruts are deeper. Weather is weatherier

But if you're new to the series, you could hardly wish for a better game. Early 2WD cars that seem strainingly dull to veterans are a chance to learn; regular car unlocks provide much incentive. With online, LAN and even split-screen support, you should never want for competition, and the 'hard steer' button is a boost for those using pads or (noooooo!) keyboards. Jumps are bigger. Ruts are deeper. Weather is weatherier: rain's a real problem now, and not just on preset stages.

Richard Burns stole the deep end of the pool and McRae swam for bluer waters, a trail of facsimile titles in the wake. And all these it conspicuously ignores. The only question is: can you?

STEVE WILLIAMS

PC GAMES ADDICT Slightly worse than *CMR 6* will be...

IT'S › Prettier › Familiar › More varied

IT'S NOT › Going to stop › What Colin does › Fundamentally new

McRepeating

87%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Codemasters ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** PIII 750, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** P4 1.5, 512Mb RAM, GeForce 3/Radeon 8-upwards 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, split screen 2-4 ■ **Link** www.codemasters.com/colinmcraerally2005 ■ **Influenced by** CMR04, Colin McRae's employment situation ■ **Alternatively** Your memories of CMR04

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

Rule the galaxy, or at least your local dedicated server

Everyone's favourite mechanical war-chicken, the AT-ST walker...

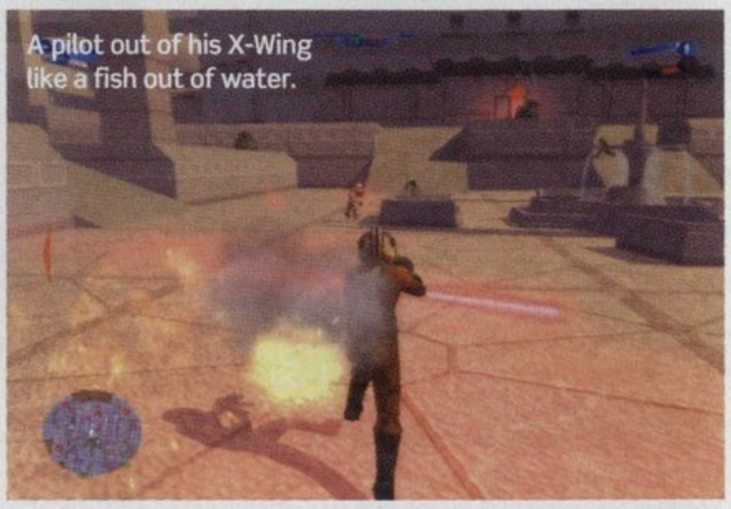
Thumbnail Review

Online warfare with everything from Ewoks to X-Wings

- ☑ Trusty blaster action
- ☑ Classic movie moments
- ☑ Killable Gungans
- ☒ Lightsaber action

Finally after a squillion *Star Wars* games over the years, finally gamers are able to feel what it's like to be lost in the major battles rather than spectating.

The Sarlac pit isn't too fussed about who it takes down...



Ever since the intimidating AT-AT stomped across cinema screens back in the early '80s, fans have dreamed of being able to take part in the epic action sequences from the Star Wars movies. Surprisingly, it's taken until now for LucasArts to attempt a dedicated multiplayer Star Wars game that recreates all those thrilling moments. Star Wars: Battlefront finally puts multiplayer action to the fore, and it's clearly banking on the popularity of games such as *Battlefield 1942* to draw gamers into the fray. But is it everything it should be?

Victory in *Battlefront* is achieved by winning control of multiple Command Posts positioned around the map to ensure that you dominate key locations and exhaust your opponent's supply of reinforcements. Like *Battlefield 1942*, *Battlefront* also introduces vehicles into the mix, from the X-Wing and TIE Fighter to the monstrous AT-AT, AT-ST, speederbikes, Tauntauns, and more. Most of the maps on offer give you the option of taking to the skies or go speeding to the frontline, if you're not confident to go it alone on foot with a trusty blaster rifle. Because Battlefront is not set in any particular time-period, there is a campaign for the Clone Wars that pits the Battledroid armies against Gungans and Republic Clonetroopers, and a Galactic Civil War campaign for the good old Rebels versus Empire confrontations. Naturally, all the set-pieces from the movies are here, and what *Battlefront* does best is recreate these familiar movie moments. There's no denying that it's a thrill to trudge beneath the legs of a giant AT-AT or zoom a speederbike between the tall trees of Endor. Being a Star Wars fan is almost crucial to *Battlefront's* appeal.

Whilst the 3D engine on show isn't anything special, clever visual effects have helped to make it look as pretty as possible, and all the Star Wars stuff is brought to life like never before. There are definitely moments when you silently, involuntarily mouth "wow", but there are also other times when you'll grimace at the low-res textures or obvious endpoints of the maps.

When it comes to the gameplay mechanics, *Battlefront* is solid if predictable. The different player classes (everything from the sniper to the heavy gunner) are all fun to use, and fairly well balanced. Every time you respawn, you'll enjoy the opportunity to choose a different class and take a new approach, such

LOCATION, LOCATION

A Galaxy Far, Far Away...

Prepare to wage war on some very familiar and yet rather alien battlefields. Nope, no Death Star.

KAMINO The home of the clone army in Episode II. Kamino's outdoor platforms become the stage for some furious firefights.

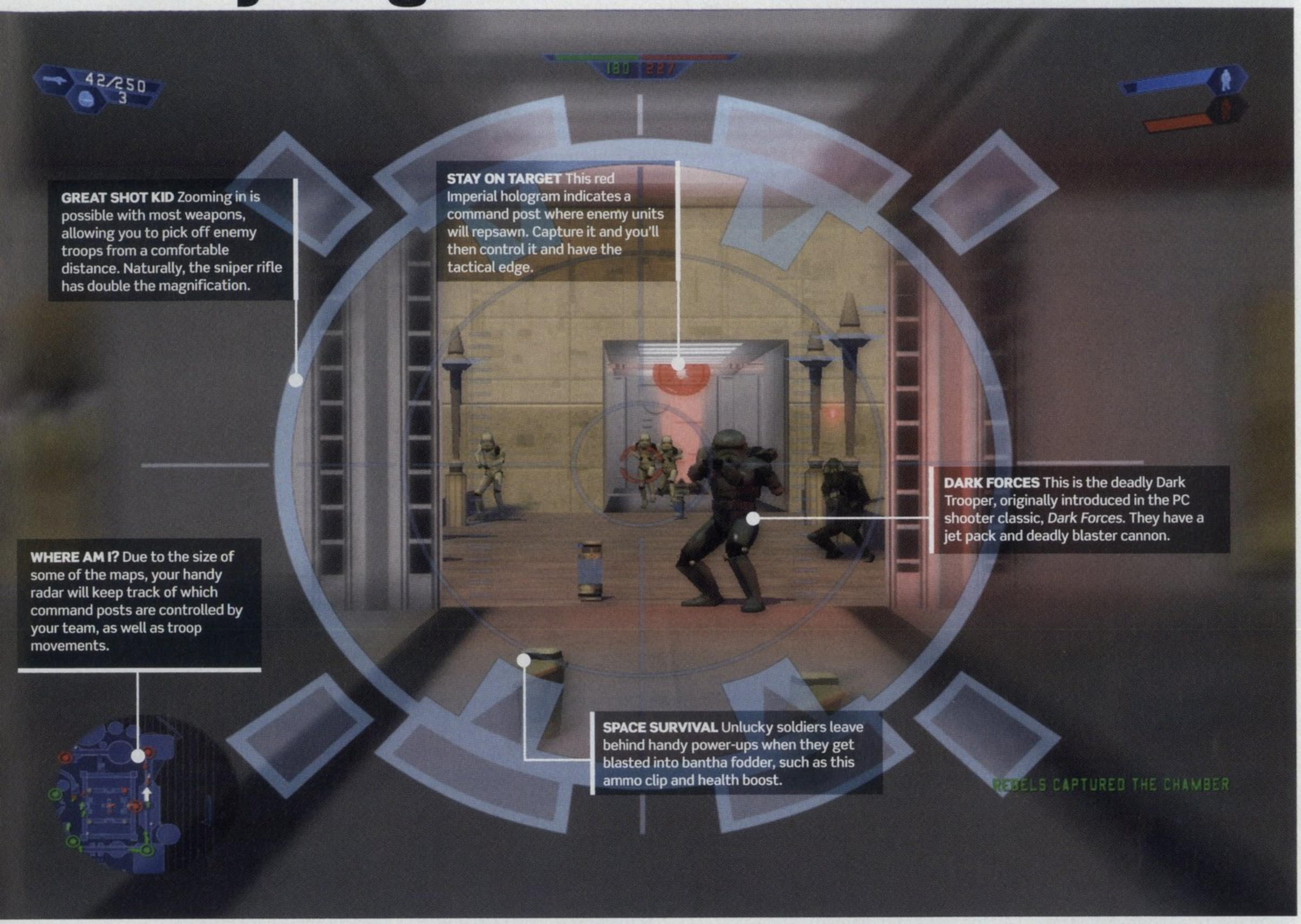
NABOO Looks tranquil huh? Thank the Force, no! Here's your chance to get revenge on those hapless Gungans.

GEONOSIS The eye candy that was the battle of Geonosis in Episode II can now be experienced. Grab a gunship and go for it.

ENDOR Help those fuzzy Ewoks lure AT-STs into a variety of archaic traps amongst the towering trees... Or better, kill the furballs!

TAKEN APART

"Set your guns to miss and follow me..."


42/250
3
180 227
GREAT SHOT KID Zooming in is possible with most weapons, allowing you to pick off enemy troops from a comfortable distance. Naturally, the sniper rifle has double the magnification.
STAY ON TARGET This red Imperial hologram indicates a command post where enemy units will repsawn. Capture it and you'll then control it and have the tactical edge.
DARK FORCES This is the deadly Dark Trooper, originally introduced in the PC shooter classic, Dark Forces. They have a jet pack and deadly blaster cannon.
WHERE AM I? Due to the size of some of the maps, your handy radar will keep track of which command posts are controlled by your team, as well as troop movements.
SPACE SURVIVAL Unlucky soldiers leave behind handy power-ups when they get blasted into bantha fodder, such as this ammo clip and health boost.
REBELS CAPTURED THE CHAMBER

is the variety of units and the way the maps allow for them all to utilise their specific abilities. The vehicles, however, are a bit hit and miss, and it's largely down to the controls – most of them are quite awkward to manoeuvre, and some of the maps are too small to allow for complete freedom in the air. They are authentic to the films, however, and there's a certain thrill to being able to jump into any and all vehicles you see. Just be prepared for frustration when another player repeatedly mows you down from the cockpit of an AT-ST.

The AI-controlled bots in the game (which you'll play against in both single and multiplayer modes), exhibit numerous behavioural problems. Whilst they generally move about the map well (pathfinding is never really an issue), they do have a habit of shooting each other in the back, whether it be lobbing grenades at their teammates' feet or firing their vehicles missiles and blasters into the back of friendly units in their path. In fact, as almost every player class can lob thermal detonators, many battles become a grenade spam fest, making getting about almost like navigating a mine field. The AI also tends to ignore any commands you give to "follow me" or "hold this position".

Battles become a grenade spam-fest

Throwing humans into the mix should theoretically improve Battlefront's appeal quite significantly, however the game definitely has problems with quirky net code and an interface that makes searching for an online game a somewhat clumsy experience. The in-game browser is unreliable and lacking basic functionality. LucasArts do promise to patch and improve the game by the time you read this review, so there's still hope.

The most frustrating thing about *Star Wars: Battlefront* is that it's a game that doesn't fulfill its potential. This really could have been the ultimate online multiplayer shooter (how could it not be with such a strong license?), and yet some basic errors in design prevent it from being an A class title. Maps are a mixed bag, the AI can be frustrating, the odd bug rears its ugly head, and getting online and having a trouble-free game is harder than it should be. Out of the box, *Battlefront* is merely an average game that can only provide a few fun single-player moments rather than spectacular multiplayer entertainment.

If LucasArts work hard on patching it, or see it fit to release tools to allow the mod community to get their hands on the game, we could yet see *Battlefront* become a real force to be reckoned with.

ELIOT FISH

PC GAMES ADDICT Like the films, a real mixture of quality...

IT'S › Epic › Action-packed fun › Full of Ewoks

IT'S NOT › Bugless › Intuitive to get online › Consistently challenging

Chewy

79%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** LucasArts ■ **Developer** Pandemic ■ **They say** PIII 1.0 GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB video card ■ **We say** PIV 2.0 GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB video card
■ **Multiplayer** NLAN, Internet, up to 320 ■ **Link** www.lucasarts.com ■ **Community** www.swbattlefront.net ■ **Influenced by** Battlefield 1942 and ILM ■ **Alternatively** Battlefield 1942 and a Star Wars mod

If a picture can paint a thousand words then this shot sums it up in one: dated.

PORT ROYALE 2

The Secret of Money Island

Arrrrh! Avast! Splice the plank and walk ye mainframe! Right. Got it out of your system? Because sadly for Jack Sparrow and Guybrush Threepwood fans, the *Port Royale* series' approach to historical adventure on the high seas is economical rather than swashbuckling, ditching pieces-of-eight for the eight-times-table.

Happily, this game is not solely about setting up profitable trade routes, although that is undoubtedly where you'll make the majority of your cash. The priority is keeping tabs on the circa-1600 market feed to know where to head and when, gradually building up a personal armada of ships with the profits. Keep the business afloat (oh my sides), and you can send your fleet all over the Caribbean in search of more directly exciting opportunities. Like buying land in towns where you've proved yourself as a regular trader and not part of a warring nation. Or accepting missions from local Governors, such as tracking down and mercilessly booting more naughty nautical types.

Sadly, the combat proves desperately dull. Battles consist of nothing more than slowly turning broadside to an enemy and firing cannons, or ramming it to send across a boarding party. It's treacle-slow and more effective than a thousand gallows at dissuading you from stocking up on cannons and besieging Belize for kicks and giggles.

This is especially annoying because *Port Royale 2* is one of those few games that will let you do exactly that. A few basic tutorial scenarios aside, the action is refreshingly freeform. The world goes on around you, with ships sailing around and plenty of diversions – including playing card games at the local inn and locking swords with scurvy dogs at the least excuse. Sure, there's plenty of fun to be had and the trading elements can get highly absorbing, but remember the action parts are the trimmings rather than the meat.

RICHARD COBBETT

Besieging Belize for kicks and giggles

PC GAMES ADDICT

Putting the bean-counting back into the Caribbean.

69%

■ **Release** Out now **Publisher** Red Ant ■ **Developer** Ascaron ■ **Multiplayer** None
■ **Link** www.ascaron.com/gb/portroyale2 ■ **Alternatively** Rise of Nations

CATWOMAN

Look what EA dragged in

Games can be art. It's true. And someone at EA clearly agrees. They must do; it's the only way to explain *Catwoman*. Of course, by 'art', I mean in the contemporary, Turner Prize sense – those tabloid-baiting creations lacking traditional signs of craft or skill and, instead, based around some supposedly clever concept. *Catwoman's* premise seems to be this: cats are wilful, independent creatures that never do what they're told, so let's do the same with the Catwoman character.

A brilliant concept, you must agree, and in executing it EA have done a first-rate job, for there's rarely a moment that you actually feel in control of Catwoman, confident you know which way she's going to move. It's not that she doesn't go forward when you press forward – it's more that forward is never the same thing twice. This is all down to a constantly shifting camera that forever darts around Catwoman and, worse, forever changes the direction that she's heading.

Actually, the camera doesn't move all the time. No, sometimes it cuts unexpectedly in a totally disorientating way, leaving you again struggling to adequately control your heroine. Incidentally, the name of Catwoman's alter ego is Patience. Thought I'd mention that. Now, a disastrous clash of controls and camera is one thing – what lifts this into realm of contemporary art is its dexterity-based, pseudo-platform, pseudo-beat-'em-up play. It's so patently unsuited to *Catwoman's* engine – and causes such profanity-inducing frustration – that the only explanation must surely be some kind of deliberate art terrorism by EA. Well, that, or this is a slapdash, cynical tie-in, but let's give them the benefit of the doubt.

Is it some form of deliberate art terrorism?

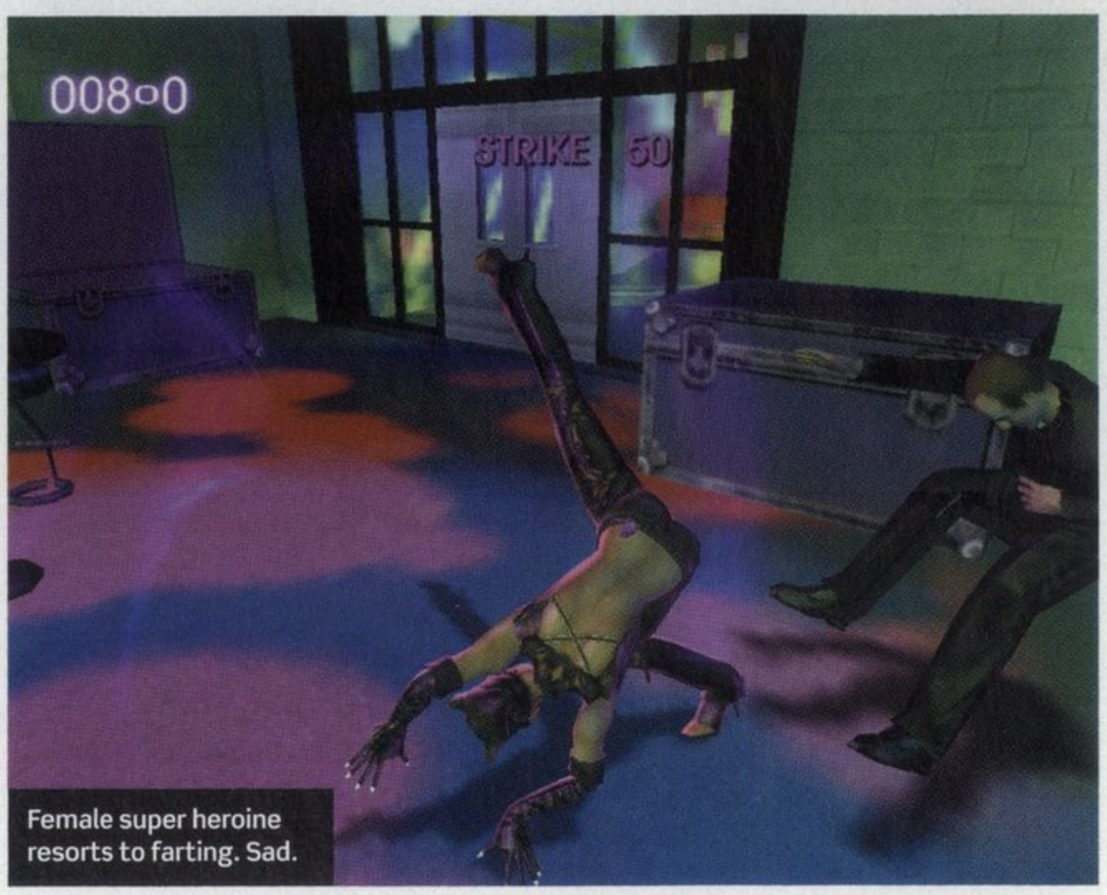
EA have forgotten only one thing – high art can only exist if there's someone dumb enough and with cash enough to buy such empty, inept efforts. Then again, which big software company paid a small fortune for the lame movie licence? Oops…

CHRIS BUXTON

PC GAMES ADDICT

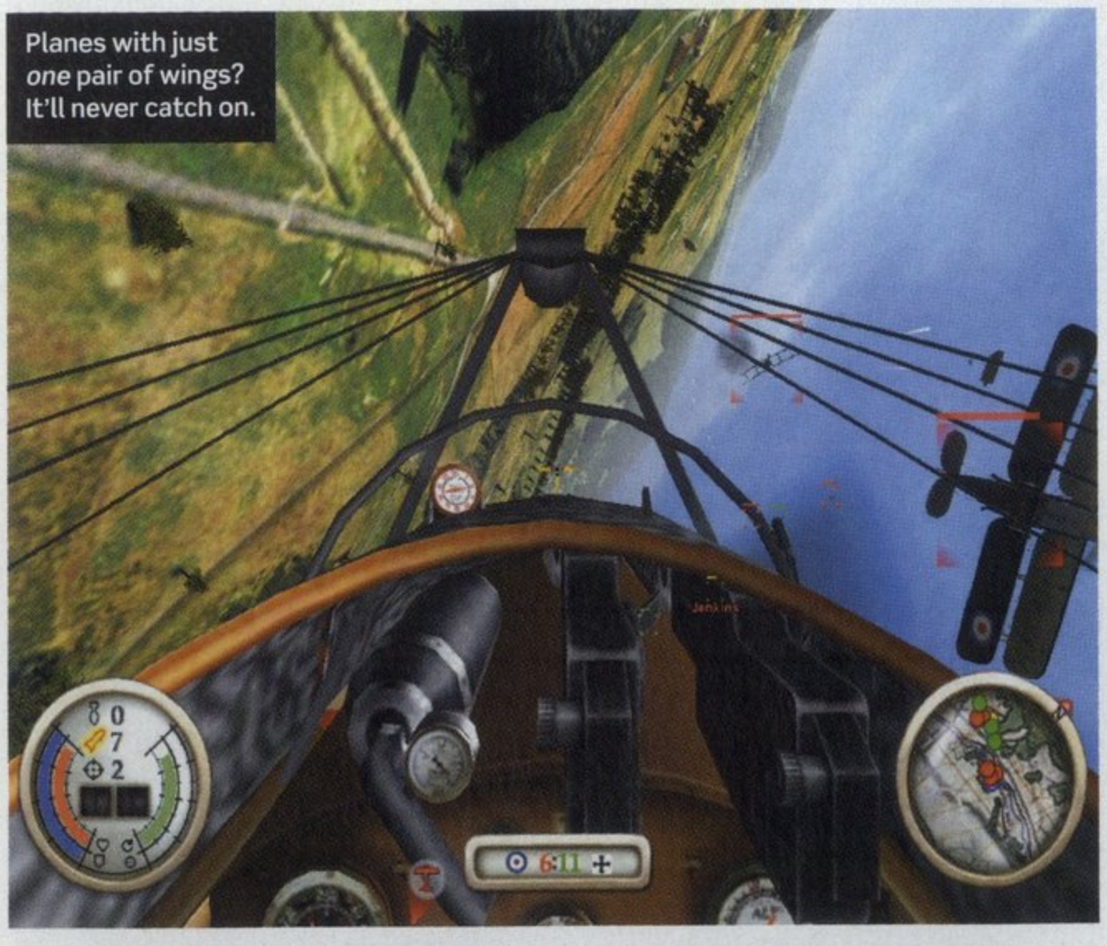
Raises games to the level of art – those paintings made from dung.

28%



Female super heroine resorts to farting. Sad.

■ **Release** Out now **Publisher** EA ■ **Developer** In-house
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.ea.com.au ■ **Alternatively** Saatchi Gallery


Planes with just *one* pair of wings? It'll never catch on.

WINGS OF WAR

It takes more than straw to break a camel's back

He reads no magazines, visits no websites, uses no forums. He has no contact with other gamers outside of multiplayer arenas. The games he plays arrive at his door stripped of all references to publisher, developer, and genre. His deadlines are generous.

If every games reviewer in the world operated under these conditions then I hazard this likeable little arcade underdog would garner more of the 75% scores it deserves than the 50% ones it will probably end up with. For a start, no reviewer would know it was a debut project from an unknown studio, launched with little marketing enthusiasm. They wouldn't know that it was also appearing on the Xbox and that that was always *a bad thing*. Lastly there'd be no chance they'd be influenced by bulletin board rants vilifying the game for not standing up and saluting when Air Commodore Authenticity entered the room.

Though *WoW*'s pretty play areas are liberally sprinkled with power-ups, and its 25 aircraft all pack preposterously potent rockets, there's actually more respect for sim sensibilities here than first meets the eye. Virtual cockpits and gunner positions are present – if crudely modelled – as are stalls, damageable plane parts, and MG overheating. Believable bogey AI and plausible handling combine to keep the dogfighting dogged. Important, given the incredibly intense 13-stage campaign.

Furballing, train, tank and balloon busting

I don't think I've ever come across an aerial offering that tries to jam quite so much into a single sortie as *WoW* does. Furballing, escort duties, train, tank, and balloon busting, recon photography, pilot rescues, plane thefts, ground-based gunnery... it's not uncommon to find yourself doing all of these activities within one mission. This hectic Heinz approach to sortie design pretty much scuppers any sense of story which is a real shame. With a stronger narrative and better netcode *WoW* could have won over even the most conditioned critics.

TIM STONE

PC GAMES ADDICT

Accessible, atmospheric and action-packed. Chocks away!

75%

■ **Release** Out now, DVD only ■ **Publisher** Take Two ■ **Developer** Silver Wish
■ **Multiplayer** 30 ■ **Link** www.gathering.com/wingsofwar/ ■ **Alternatively** SWON

SHERLOCK HOLMES
THE CASE OF THE SILVER EARRING

No wonder he was a drug addict

There are two things I don't expect to be doing when playing a computer game. One, as is so often mentioned in such reviews, is reading books. The other is taking tests.

Reading books is clearly wondrous, but much as you don't expect to find yourself hang-gliding when doing the washing up, it's not appreciated to discover that a PC game relies on your reading page after page of exposition. It's lazy storytelling for a medium that offers both visuals and sound, and worse, when the text is as dreary as that in *The Case of the Silver Earring*, it's nothing but a chore.

Taking tests is a whole new level of "What On Earth?" As each chapter of the traditional murder-mystery point-and-click comes to an end, you're required to answer a series of questions on the events, backing up your answers with selected evidence from the numerous conversation logs, items found, and noted events. Huh? Where am I? School? Please. It's ambiguous beyond comprehension, and had Digital Jesters not provided a walkthrough with my copy of the game, I'm not entirely sure I would have found the patience to progress past the first chapter.

You don't expect to find yourself hang-gliding

Written by a noted extreme-o-fan from the SH Appreciation Society, the story manages to feel like a potential Holmesian tale. But because of this admiring approach, Doyle's characters have lost the flaws that unsettled the reader. It flattens the atmosphere the pretty pictures and fantastic music try to create.

The Silver Earring really does reduce 'point and click' down to its purest meaning. Moments of inspiration are nil, as you tiredly click through all the options until the next location opens, or the next laboured puzzle appears. With the tedium of texts and tests, a decent adventure starts to feel an awful lot like school homework. A part of my past I don't need to revisit, thanks.

JOHN WALKER

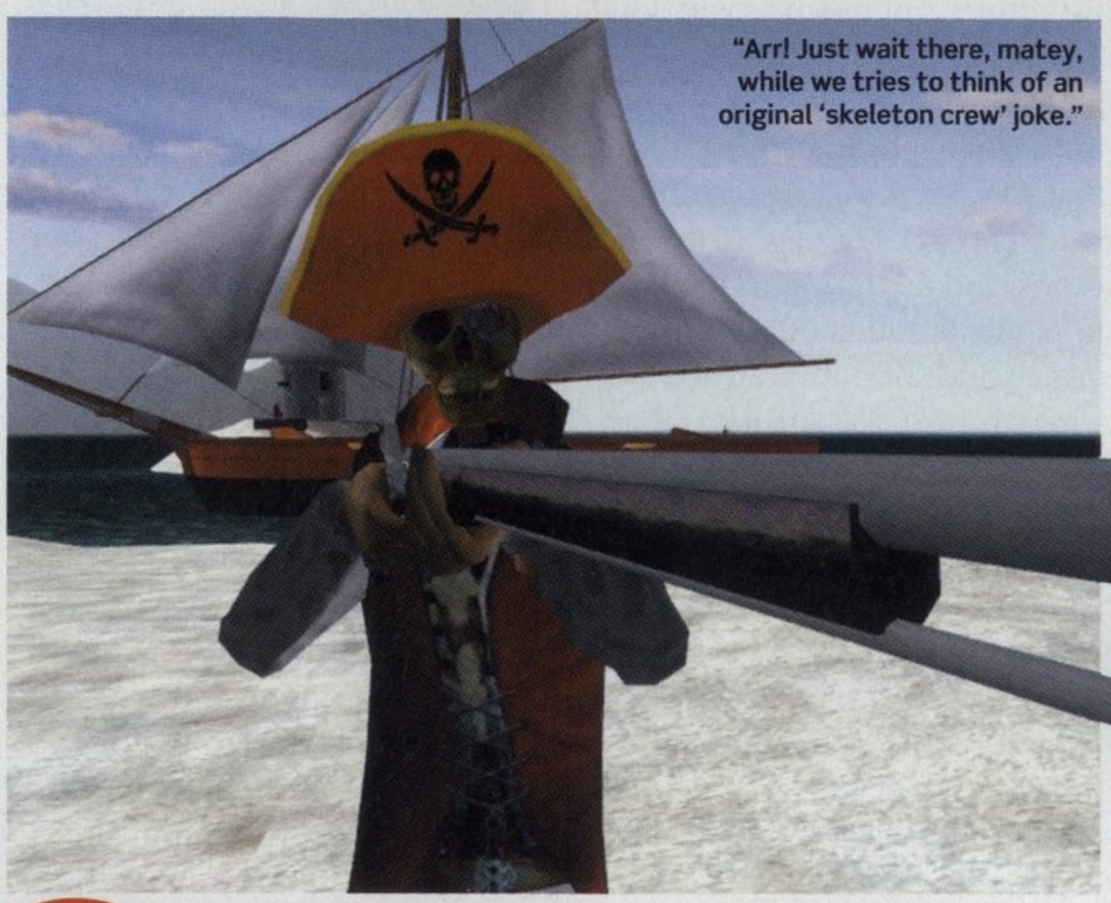
PC GAMES ADDICT

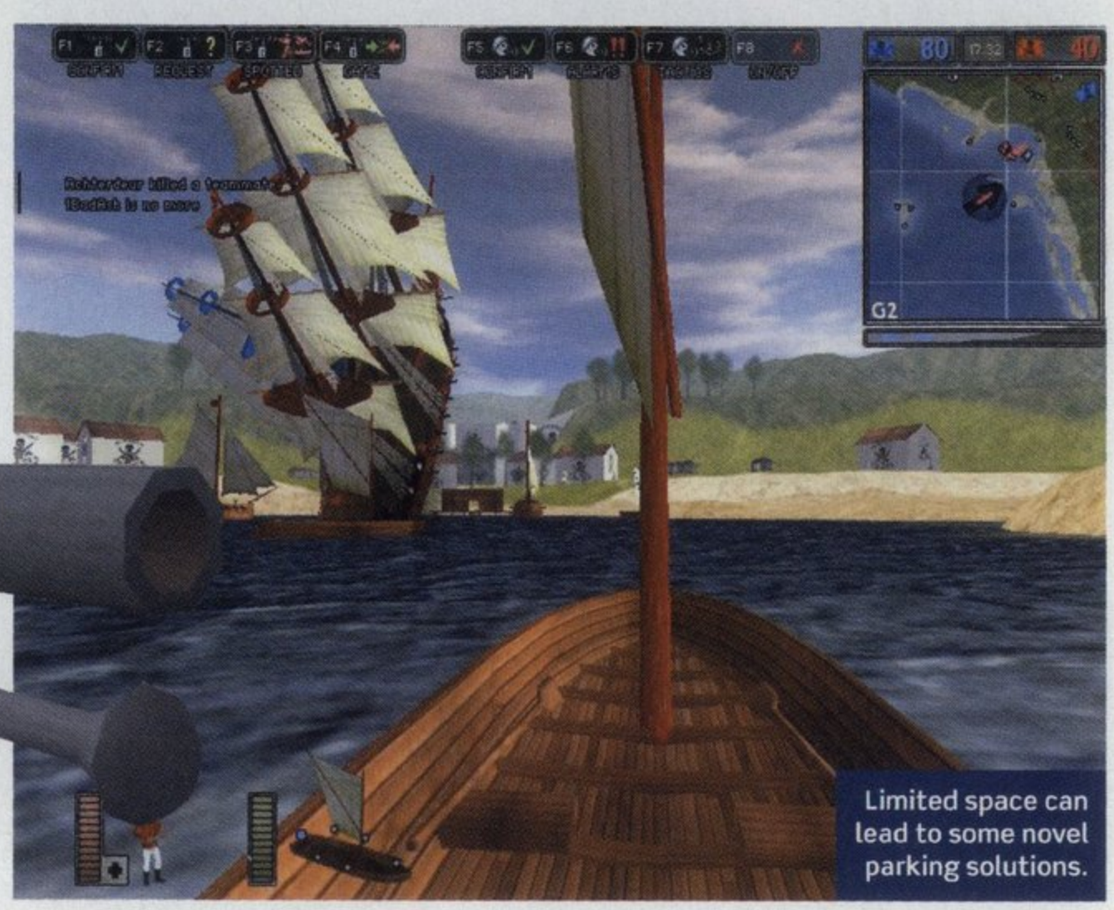
"Elementary school homework, my dear Watson. Elementary."

59%

The Case of the Lost Small Piece of Paper had an unexciting conclusion.

■ **Release** Out now **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Frogwares
■ **Link** www.sherlockholmesgame.com ■ **Alternatively** The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes





CELEB

HI, I'M A GAME DEVELOPER

Name Demis Hassabis
Credits *Republic, Evil Genius*

My fave game: "I'll have to come clean: right now it's *Pro Evolution Soccer 3*. My favourite game of all time would be *Starcraft*, but I can't find anyone left to beat any more."

My fave mod: "*RtCW*'s *Enemy Territory* has been played to death at Elixir – it kept *Battlefield: 1942* off our PCs."

The thing I'm most looking forward to: "Finding the time to play *Perimeter*. It's based on the boardgame Go, which I'm a fan of... the concept of it being based on territory is really interesting."

PIRATE SOFTWARE

Battlefield: Pirates

Sail of the century or sloopy seconds?

DOWN LOADER
A *Battlefield: 1942* mod for your *har-harrd* drive

Avast ye salty sea dogs, and similar clichés, for the good ship PCGA has sighted a promising trend on the horizon. Last month, we featured *Air Buccaneers*, the jolly-roger balloon sim for *UT2004*. This month, it's the turn of *Battlefield: Pirates*, a mod that plunders every pirate convention in the treasure chest in the name of fun.

So pay attention, ye scurvy-ridden maggots, this be how it works. (*Oh for heaven's sake* – Prod Ed.) Two teams, the glorious pirates and the evil, flea-bitten zombies, are looting the ocean blue. There be gold in those shipwrecks, and it's your job to climb on board and loot the chests, for fame, glory and high scores.

The BF: Pirates team have assembled a fine fleet of yachts, rowboats, sloops and canoes – and the occasional single-seater periscope-equiped barrel. But our favourite is the glorious galleon: a six storey floating fortress, bristling with gunports. Watching two of these primitive frigates exchange massive broadsides is a treat. There's even a sop to the veterans of the *BF:1942* airborne corps: on some maps you can hop into the basket of Montgolfier balloons, and drop powder kegs.

Of the five player classes, the musket-wielding Huntsman and the Cannoneer are best used for base defence, while the Carpenter replaces the Engineer. Raiders can swing on board the enemy boats and cut down the crew with cutlasses. The Drunkard has nothing but a giant jug of grog for stunning his opponents. Why's he there? Because it's funny. Arrr!

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

250Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.bfpirates.com
Discs	Full version on the DVD
Requires	Patched *BF:1942*
No dead parrot	

LET US SPEND YOUR BANDWIDTH
Use the Download Manager to aid modem digestion. Alternatively, find the month's best mods on the DVD.

◀ BROADBAND BREEZE — BROADBAND BREAKER ▶

10Mb	50Mb	150Mb	1Gb
56k friendly	*Modem mare*	*Modem meltdown*	*Nightie night*

User-Created Patches

When developers won't finish a game, it's left to the fans

Few PC games are perfect. There are too many factors to balance, too much work involved in their creation for them to be ever truly finished. For developers, it's sometimes easier to paper over the cracks in a game than spend weeks, or even months, polishing it until it gleams. That's where the fans come in: given time and energy any game can be improved, with or without the original developers' tacit support.

The user-created patches listed here range from simple visual tweaks to full makeovers. In the case of the *Baldur's Gate* patch, it was a case of scouring archives, and learning everything possible about the elements dropped from the published version. It's a measure of the fans' love for the game that they took this much trouble. This is no botch job: it's restoration work on an old master.

TIM EDWARDS

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

■ **By** Icelus, Barren Fischa and Cliffette ■ **Adds** New quests, fixes plot holes ■ **Link** http://ub.icelus.net

In their rush to hit the release date, Bioware left some plot holes in *Baldur's Gate 2: Shadows of Amn*. This fills the gaps. There's added story, more adventures, and most importantly the re-insertion of Minsc's NPC quest, 'The Kidnapping of Boo', using pieces of the original dialogue written by Bioware's David Gaider. This is a huge work, and an essential piece of code for *BG* fans.

SYSTEM SHOCK 2 REBIRTH

■ **By** Etienne Aubert ■ **Adds** New textures, boobies. ■ **Link** http://perso.wanadoo.fr/etienne.aubert/sshock/sshock_rebirth.htm

If you've ever felt that the claustrophobic horror of *System Shock 2* was somewhat muted by square heads and trapezoid torsos, you need to apply the *Rebirth* patch. Be aware that this isn't for minors: the pixel fiddlers responsible have taken *extra* care with the silicon-augmented, flesh ripping Midwives. We salute these digital perverts.

DOWN LOADER TOP FAN PATCHES

THE BEST

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS 04

■ **By** Blackhole Motorsports ■ **Adds** All the best *GPL* tweaks ■ **Link** www.bhmotorsports.com/GPL

The creative community that surrounds *Grand Prix Legends* has never received the acclaim it deserves. Expect that to change with this re-working of the original *GPL* demo (on the disc), released six years ago. This updated demo includes all the original tweaks and retouches that Papyrus released for their own game, along with all the essentials *GPL* veterans install. Fans should consider *GPL 2004* their first step in the wider world of *Grand Prix Legends*.

Even the texture of the track is improved in *GPL 04*.

DEUS EX 2: REBIRTH

■ **By** Offtopic Productions ■ **Adds** High quality skins ■ **Link** www.dx2rebirth.offtopicproductions.com

Invisible War was always going to be a target for mod-makers, thanks to its *Unreal* engine. This ongoing and ambitious project aims to re-texture vast swathes of the game, replacing the low-resolution textures of the original (a result of its joint Xbox/PC origins) with something a little more complex. Thankfully, there's little performance hit in applying these tweaks, a side effect of the same cross-platform development.

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

■ **By** Graphics by John-P ■ **Adds** Skins, contact lenses ■ **Link** www.graphics-by-john-p.com

There's been a longstanding continuity error throughout the *Thief* series - the changing colour of Garrett's one remaining eye from blue to green from *Thief 1* to *Thief: Deadly Shadows*. John-P's texture pack fixes this glaring mistake, while adding further detail to Garrett's scar, armour and body. The reptilian Kurshok, the Ratbeasts, and the City statues also receive a makeover.

START-UP >

1. Make a backup of your saved games. Some of these patches could conceivably break them.
2. Download the files from the link given, or find them on this month's cover discs.
3. All patches come with a comprehensive readme. Follow this to the letter. Don't miss a step.
4. When you're sure the game has upgraded, consider re-importing your savegames.

GTA: VICE CITY MOD

Multi Theft Auto 0.4

Tsk, it'll be the Usual Suspects all over again...

DOWN LOADER VICE CITY MOD

It can be a lonely life, running down whores and shooting cops all by yourself...

Forget *City of Heroes* and all that doo-goodery. Crime is what pays the bills, and in this multiplayer hack for *GTA: Vice City*, we can now finally get together online for some all-in villainy.

Multi Theft Auto's latest mod finally gives us online access to *Vice City*, turning the singleplayer sandbox into a gathering of gamers. You can take part in a stunt event or deathmatch, depending on what server's up and running. The stunt server makes the most of *VC*'s easy modability by adding extra ramps, positioning rows of cars together and removing the NPCs from your path. It's best played as a co-operative experience, as gamers gather to watch, cajole and challenge each other. Trucks fitted with sloped ramps feature as well, so impromptu stunt sessions are never far away.

Deathmatch alters the dynamic, recruiting you into one of the city's factions – ethnic or State approved. Cops fight robbers, FBI battle immigrant gangs or you can just go mental and kill everyone. Each side has it's own distinct abilities too so it's more than run and gun. Granted, the mod isn't finished, but *MTA* is getting there.

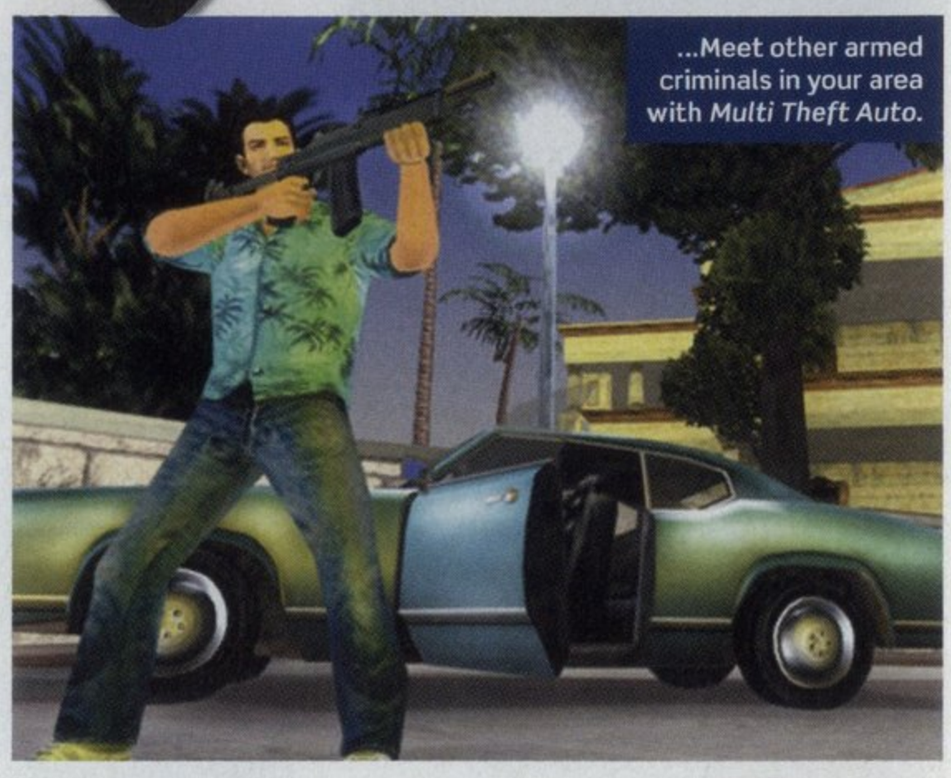
PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

1.18Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.mtavc.com
Discs	On the CD
Requires	*GTA: Vice City*

Further proof that everything's better online



...Meet other armed criminals in your area with *Multi Theft Auto*.

RTCW MOD

DEGENERATION

Take a flat-packed weapon of mass destruction, some gun-toting Axis and Allies types and one ingenious idea, and you have the *DeGeneration* team play mod for *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*.

Each team Each team gathers at their base, which houses their death ray. Yes, death ray. The generator powering your super gun has to be constructed from parts falling into the drop zone in the middle of the map. And naturally you've got to fight off the other team to bag the bits. It rocks.

ON THE DVD Dying to t-t-talk about your *DeGeneration*? Appropriately enough, it's waiting for you in > Mods

Evil Germans: if your WWII death ray fails, keep the bits and you can sell them on to James Bond supervillains in 30 years' time.

Calling all mods, indy games, machinima, shareware... Send your links to:

pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

HALF-LIFE MOD

Science and Industry

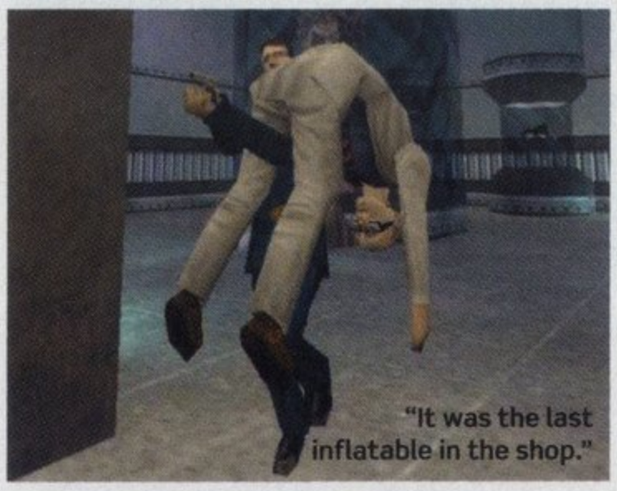
Corporate war comes to *Half-Life*

Bullets and Bunsen burners, together at last. *Science and Industry*, a teamplay *Half-Life* mod, lands you in a messy corporate battle that revels in the '80s business ideal: destroy the competition. With guns.

Two corporations strive to nab the best technology. You're a security guard, assigned to protect a team of scientists as they work. Your scientists research the technology that will blow away the competition – literally. They make guns and cyber implants, etc. But they're vulnerable. Nearby fighting disturbs their work and they can also be kidnapped to work for the other side. It's up to you to protect them by using the very technology they create, and by stealing the technology of the other side.

And what technology: dual Uzis, the infamous Guass gun, chunky pistols, vials of flash-eating viruses. It goes on and on. The fighting is classic *Half-Life* based fragging, and really comes to life when the scientists have the time and money to create something special.

Speaking of money – you need it. Everything has an impact on your company's finances. Those weapons don't come cheap, and if you die and need to be cloned, that costs revenue too. You have to keep under budget – now where have we heard that before?



"It was the last inflatable in the shop."

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

74Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.planethalflife.com/si
Discs	On The DVD
Requires	Half-Life

Corporate co-operation crushes competition!

Counter-Strike 2D

Forget *Counter-Strike: Source*, with its evil real-world physics and 'good' graphics. *Counter-Strike 2D* is the future of the web's biggest tactical shooter. A top-down view and cute sprites now bring you CS miniaturised for your gaming pleasure. Every map has been recreated, flattened out and altered where necessary, but this game remains a beautifully accurate rendition of the original. The weaponry, footsteps, and gunfire noises: everything's here in remixed, same-but-different fashion. To play, you just drag the mouse over the target and run around. Mmm, tacticalicious. This wonderful stuff can be found at **www.csnation.net/cs2d**.

HALO MAP

New Mombassa Classic

We get *Halo 2* first! Sorta

The Banshees are ultra versatile, but slow enough to target with rifles or missles.

In the year 3000, TV remote controls will be classified as weapons of mass destruction.

The flag-nabbing Banshee driver homes in on his base. I'm just behind, letting off bolts of plasma at his rear-end. Just one more blast...

His escape is audacious to say the least. He twists the Banshee, drives down and into the heart of his base. He sacrifices himself by dropping out of the ship, right onto the flag base, dying as he hits the ground. I'm in awe – not because of his skill, but because the level allowed it. *New Mombassa Classic* is a stunning *Halo* map.

It's built to resemble the E3 demo of *Halo 2*, a 20 minute fragfest of the Master Chief on Earth. A huge, raised highway stretches the length of the map. You can go over it, perfect for sneak attacks, or underneath, using it as cover. Multi-storey carparks at either end provide sniper areas, but they're wide enough to take Warthogs and Scorpion tanks up as well. No single vehicle has dominance. A beautifully balanced map, worthy of Bungie.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

10Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.halocity.org
Discs	On the CD
Requires	*Halo*
Xbox, schmexbox	

FAR CRY MOD

AEon's Canyon

DOWN LOADER FAR CRY MOD

Come fly with me

Beautiful islands in Micronesia are always good places to hide out. The Japanese did it in WWII, and now a "mysterious futuristic civilisation" have taken up residence in this leafy singleplayer *Far Cry* add-on.

Jack's on the hunt for their heavily protected base. Winding around the outside of the towering central rockface, if you survive *Far Cry*'s notoriously prescient mercs, you'll reach the launchpad for the hang-glider – the perfect way to see the rest of the level. It's worth the firefight to get to the transport, but we won't spoil the rest of the map for you.

Far Cry's level editing tools have freed the imagination of creator AEon. The level is stunning – quite the most visually crafted freebie we've ever come across. Long drops in the rock are filled with glorious blue pools, just begging to be jumped in. So jump in.

Kill 'em quick, enjoy the view at your leisure.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

34Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.planetquake.com/aeons
Discs	On the CD
Requires	Requires: *Far Cry*, patched to 1.1
Azure, blue lushness	

Down with the 'hood. Up with the visor.

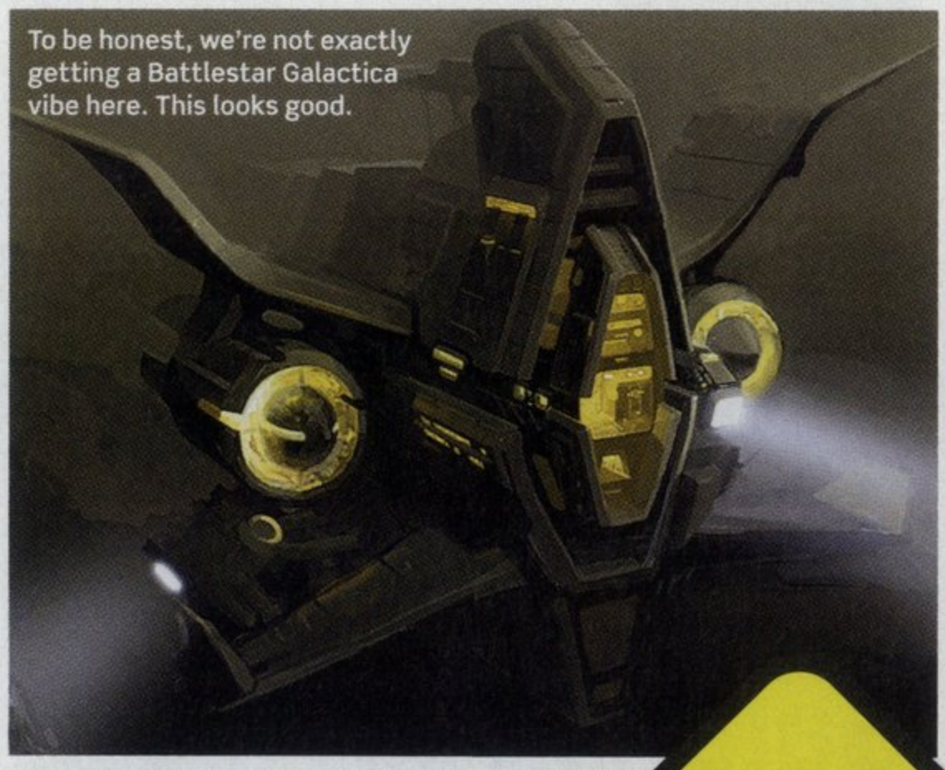
MACHINIMA

Galaxy Movies

Indulge your Boba Fett-ish

The early Fraps-fuelled machinima exploits of the *Star Wars Galaxies* community were typified by mediocre Jedi and Entertainer movies. But then came the revelation of Fett's Vette. The first bars of MC Chris' infectious rapping turned heads, and, smiles became cheers as everyone's favourite bounty hunter (played in-game by movie maker Balgosa) gyrated across our screens. The work of creators Windspire Entertainment (http://windspireentertainment.com) has inspired so much awe and laughter ever since, that we just had to tell you about it. Do yourself a favour and hit Windspire's site to watch the brilliant Fett's Vette music vid, then see the rest of their bravura works. Here's a quick guide to the funny footage that awaits.

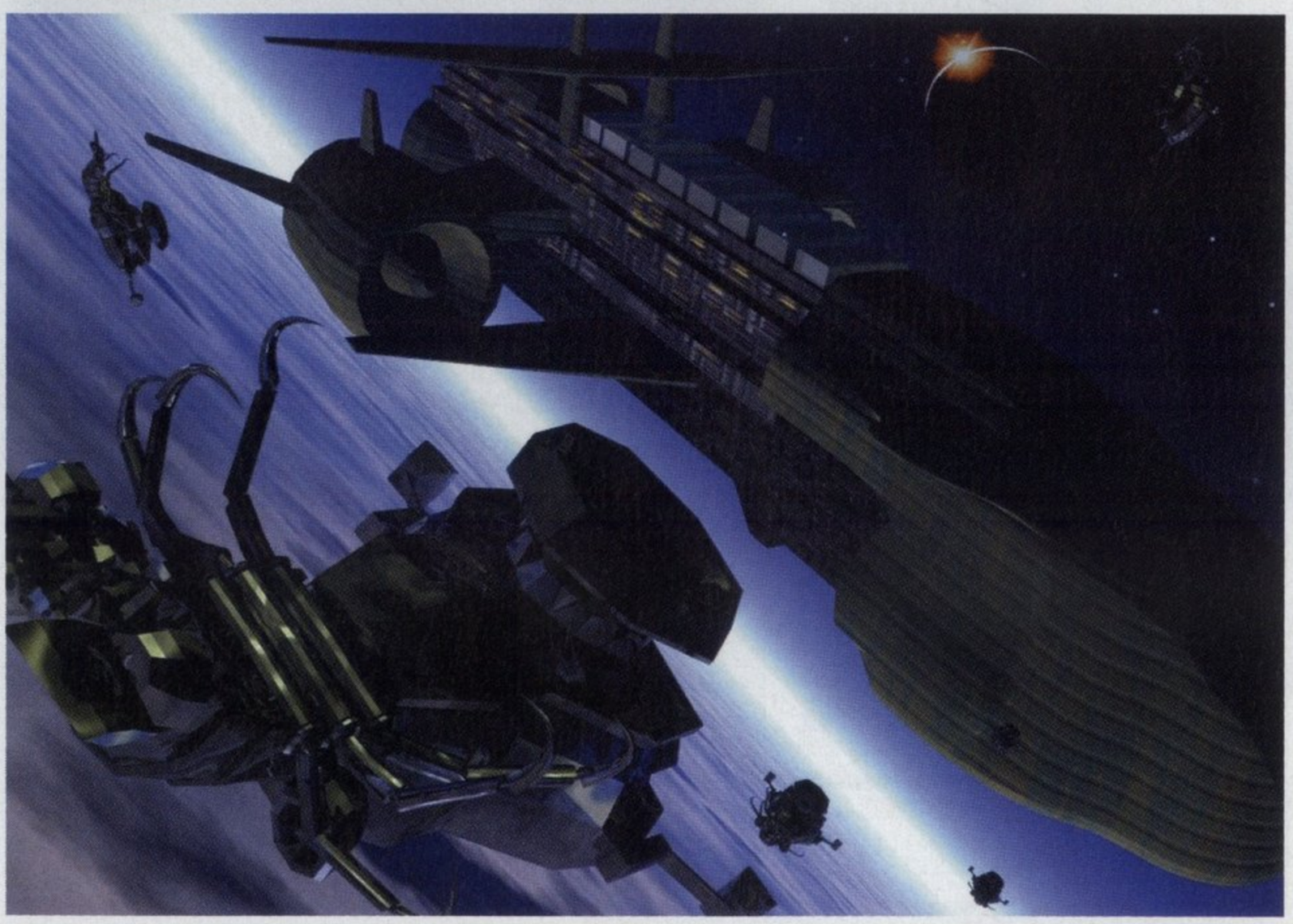
VIDEO	SLEEVE NOTES
FETT'S VETTE	Inspired by the supreme Baddd Spellah remix (www.badddspellah.com) of the Star Wars rap by MC Chris (www.mcchris.com), now cemented on Mark Donald's hard drive, think of this as the official MTV video. It's that good. Features Mandorlorian armour and jet packs.
ICE MAN	The most popular download on Windspire and it's not hard to see why. It stars a Vanilla Ice lookey-likey wigging out on Tatooine with his mates, a speeder, and a R2 unit billowing dry ice, all to the tune of the classic 'Ice Ice Baby'. It doesn't come any better.
YATTA	This is definitely the odd fish in the net. Probably because it's based on the video to a track by Japanese band Green Leaves Yattat. Relish the sight of a group of *SWG* characters shaking their stuff on Naboo. In skimpy green pants. We laughed so much it hurt.
PRETTY FLY	An early work, but still a gem. Pretty Fly for a Jedi is the tale of a young Obi Wan Kenobi strutting around on Tatooine like he owns the place. Again it's inspired by an audio work, a Star Wars remix of Offspring's 'Pretty Fly for a White Guy' by an as yet unknown artist.
CHEEKY CHEEKY	You guessed it. The Cheeky Girls get the Windspire treatment in a movie that features some of the most co-ordinated bits of *SWG* dancing you're ever going to see. Be warned there's lots of flesh on show, including a naked Wookiee. Oh, and close-ups of virtual bottoms.


To be honest, we're not exactly getting a Battlestar Galactica vibe here. This looks good.

MOD NEWS

America's Army bumps into NASA

The funny thing is, Hull really does look *exactly like that.*



HALF-LIFE 2

Project Hull Breach

Humberside cracks down on tourism

A realistic sci-fi mod? That's the tautalogical premise behind this multiplayer project. Envisioned as a dessert to Valve's eagerly-awaited main course, it comes with a welcome side-order of jet-packs, zero gravity combat, and recon druids. (*Actually, it turns out they're recon* droids, *but we prefer Sutherns' typo* – Prod Ed.)

The mod was inspired by 'Battle of Proxycon', the sci-fi rolling demo benchmark that featured in 3DMark 03. But its slant towards realism evolves from an even more unlikely source – the recent Battlestar Galactica mini-series. "I was very impressed with the realism portrayed" says mod Producer Julian Young. "The strong military influence and the use of projectile weapons rather than sci-fi laser effects presented something more believable. That's the approach we've taken: *America's Army* combined with NASA-influenced technology."

Impressed with the realism of Battlestar Galactica

They'll be no 'ridiculous' laser guns, as Young calls them, instead the two factions will be armed with bullet slingers, grenades and EMPs based on modern-day equivalents. Floating in space or skimming planet surfaces, they're locked in a desperate struggle to break into the enemy vessel while defending the hull of their own base ship. A simple last man standing game mode is planned, but there's a new twist to counter campers and to keep the interest of players who get their toes tagged early on. Dead players will respawn as Covert Recon Bots (CRB's), tiny manoeuvrable droids that can scan the battlescape for enemies, dish out some minor damage and repair bulkheads to keep baddies at bay. CRBs that detect an intruder can alert fellow players still in human form. The human players can then bring up a live feed from their minicams.

Operations are directed from the player's in-helmet HUD, a multifaceted display that will replace the traditional interface. Health and ammo will be invisible by default, so you'll need to bring your visor down to bring up information on suit and ship damage. Superbly, your experience will change dramatically when your visor is down. You'll be cut off from the battle sounds around you, which should help create a genuinely tense atmosphere.

It's an effect that epitomises the overall ethos of *Hull Breach*. "Gritty, claustrophobic realism," says Young. "We don't want you to feel that you're at your keyboard; we want you in that suit, living the experience."

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Multiplayer
Link www.hull-breach.com
Percentage complete 10%

Middle-Earth is huge. *Morrowind* is huge. Clearly they were meant for each other.

MOD NEWS RING BACK

MORROWIND

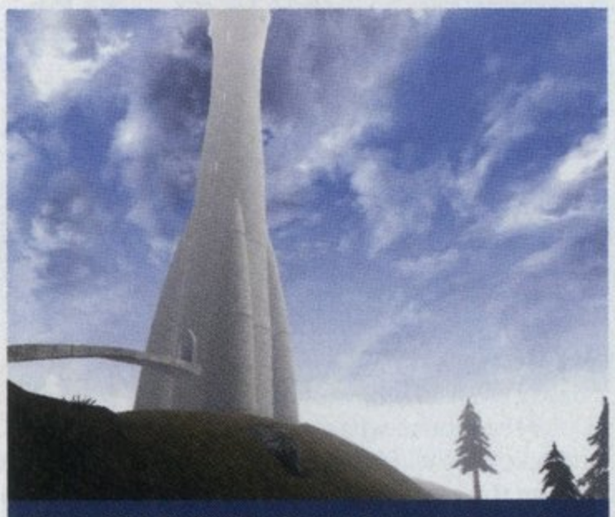
Middle-Earth

Morrowind to do some straight Tolkien

You can easily see why *Morrowind* fansite-owner Dark One started thinking of Middle-Earth when he saw the construction set that would ship with the game back in 2002. The *Morrowind* engine was specifically designed to let players explore a vast, hand-crafted, fantasy landscape rendered in beautiful detail – the perfect way to take a tour of Tolkien's world. So why has it taken two years and a hundred team members to even get close to the first public release?

MeMod, as it has become known, is ambitious. The team were fed up with playing anonymous amnesiacs in RPGs, so filling in enough optional detail about your character in *MeMod* can land you with a house, possessions and even an NPC family – as per your story. Your choice of race decides not only where you start – Elves in Rivendell, Dwarves in Iron Forge – but also how and why you get caught up in the main plot. The MeMod team want you to have a reason to give up domestic bliss, and a reason that makes sense for someone of your particular race.

Should you choose *not* to get caught up in the main plot, it'll happen without you. Wars, conquests and shifts in power happen on set dates, whether or not you're around to see them. Then, if you decide to join in later, there are multiple 'entry points' into the plot scattered along the way.



Fun in Middle-Earth. That's Ent-ertainment.

The main plot events won't be tied to the films – the team want to create an original story in their beloved Middle-Earth. But that's not to say you won't run into some familiar faces along the way. The first beta is due any day now, so we're about to find out how much the team's hard work has paid off.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

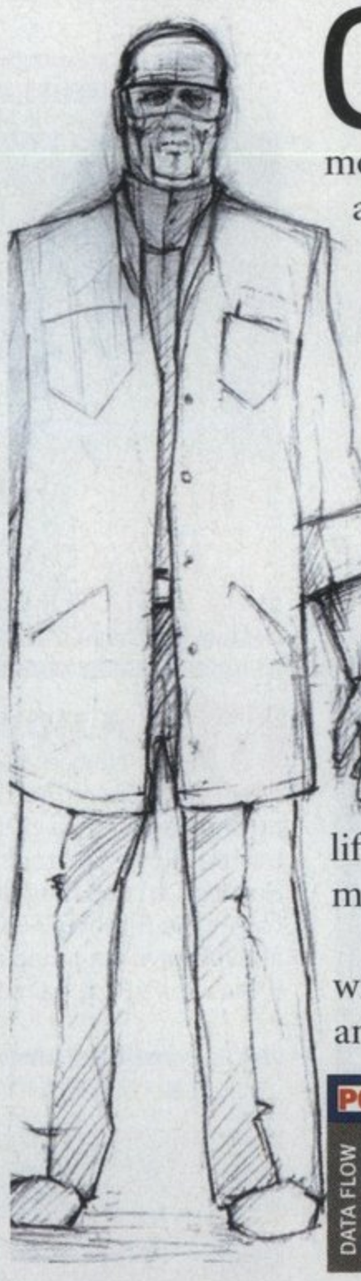
Type Singleplayer
Link www.memod.co.uk
Percentage complete 60%

He's so French he looks ready to take on Greenpeace single-handedly...

FAR CRY/HALF-LIFE 2

Citizen-132

French zombies? Oh the horror



Citizen-132 is a survivor. Despite the *Half-Life 2* slippages and the stalling of the *Far Cry* SDK, this mod rumbles on, defying the odds. Just as its hero will have to.

You play Jack Newell, ex French Foreign Legionnaire caught up in the usual round of sinister biological experiments in an underground research facility. Having taken his lady love away for some apre-ski in the French Alps, Jack sees her carted away under the arm of a huge mutated beast. He's left to unravel the mysteries of his sinister holiday while fending off all the mountain wolves and life-threatening conditions that the mountains can throw at him.

Vehicles for this alpine adventure will include snowmobiles, snowboards and, excellently, ski lifts.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Singleplayer/Multiplayer
Link www.citizen-132.com
Percentage complete 10%

UT2004 MOD

ASYLUM

Survival horror is proving to be a very popular theme in the mod world right now. The latest effort is *Asylum* for *UT2004*, which casts you as 'the Patient'. Naturally this means you're holed up in a nightmarish loony bin and must fight off waves of zombie-like mental patients. Apparently the inmates specialist attacks will be inspired by particular illnesses, which sounds suitably sick.

We can expect some puzzling along the way, but, as an *UT2004* mod, it's also likely to lay on plenty of twitch gaming moments. The only worrying factor is the team's boast that all their huge environments have been extensively researched... which kind of suggests they've all spent lengthy periods within padded walls. Let's hope they escape in time for the release date.

How to make a multi-player *Ground Control II* map

BY DAN GRILIOPOULOS

D-I-Y

A multiplayer *GCII* level you can make in a lunch hour

WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

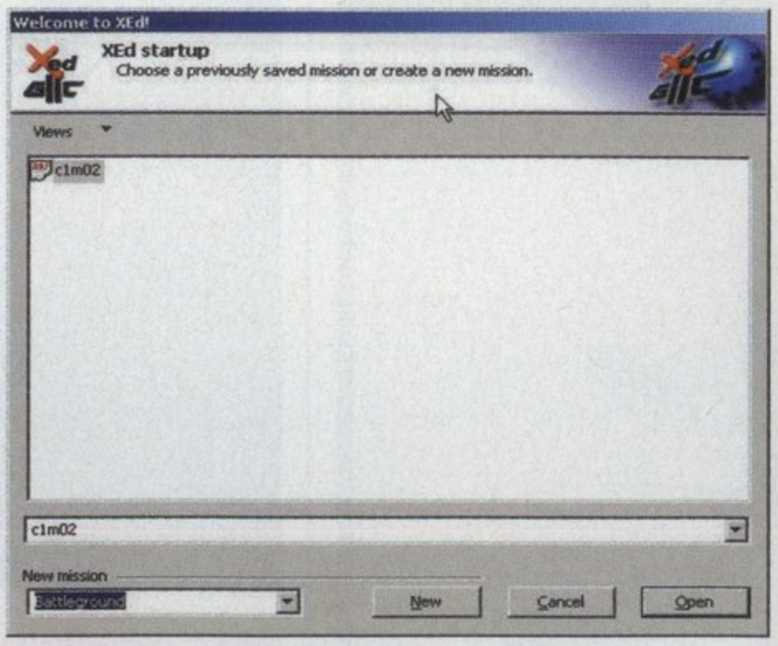
Skill Medium
Time About 1 hour

WHAT WILL I NEED?

- *Ground Control II*, plus latest patch **www.groundcontrol2.com**
- Example map and extra notes: **On the CD > Toolkit/DIY/Extras**

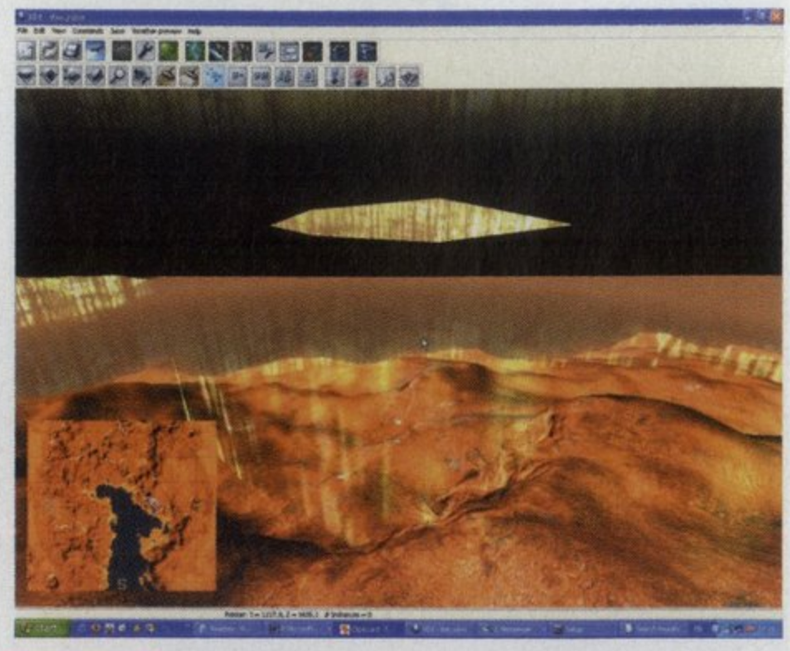
PCGAMES RESOURCE HARVESTER

- **Massive's official editing site**
  http://xed.massive.se
- **For more advanced modders, the SDK is here**
  www.groundcontrol2.com
- **Talk to the people in the know**
  http://forum.massive.se
- **A quickstart guide for Xed**
  www.massive.se/upload/Xed_Quickstart.pdf



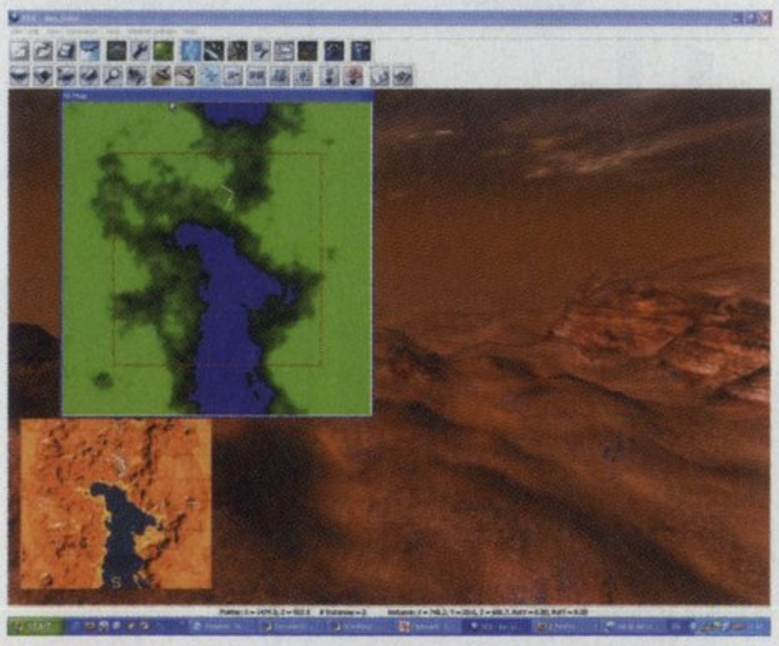
01 OFFICER XED

Install Xed from the *GCII* disc, and boot 'er up. A multi-screen setup will help, as Xed endlessly throws up multiple large windows. First, start a new map. In the File menu, click New. Now select your terrain; this is the only place you'll be able to change it, so choose well young one. Farmland means swamp, Battleground is ruined city, and the rest are self-explanatory. Avoid the orange map, as this is used for gradient checks. We'll be working with desert.



02 TALKING 'BOUT TERRAIN GENERATION

Go to Commands > Flood Fill and enter 30 to produce a low-level uniform playing field. Now go to Commands > Data > Generate Fractal Heightmap. Click the load button and select one of the presets: Desert Canyons or Desert Hills ideally. Click Generate, and a battleground should appear. Click on Commands > Select Environment and alter it from default. This should remove the scrolling Matrix sky.



03 A MOVING TALE

Navigating your newly created map is simplicity itself. You simply use the mouse wheel to move up and down, while clicking and holding the right mouse button allows you to drag-move on the horizontal plane. Holding Ctrl and dragging the RMB gives you mouselook. Want to get the fetching minimap displayed in the screenshot above? Save your map and it'll be automatically generated. (Press Shift-F6 for a map showing the map bounds.)

04 A LOWERING BROW

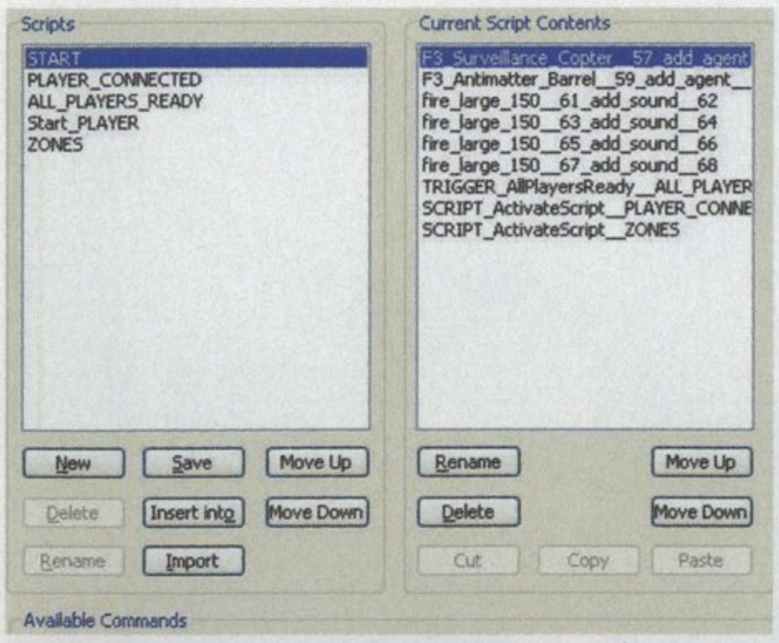
What's that? Not a fan of the Mandelbrot-style fractal map? You want to sculpt it yourself? Click on the WorldPlusMinusTool. Left-clicking with this will raise the terrain according to the settings in the World Brush options box. Shift-clicking lowers terrain. If you want to set the terrain to a set height to make a flat area, the WorldSet HeightTool acts a height-picker, and the WorldPaintTo Height tool can be used to paint to the currently selected level.

05 DIFFERENT STORKS

Select the TexturePaintTool (shortcut V). Pick a texture from the drop-down box. If you look at the map, you'll see textures are automatically updated when you've changed heights. You'll be painting over these, but watch out; in some of the terrain sets there are textures at the bottom of the palette that are meant only for vertical surfaces. Left-click to paint; you can erase with the next tool along, the TextureErase Tool.

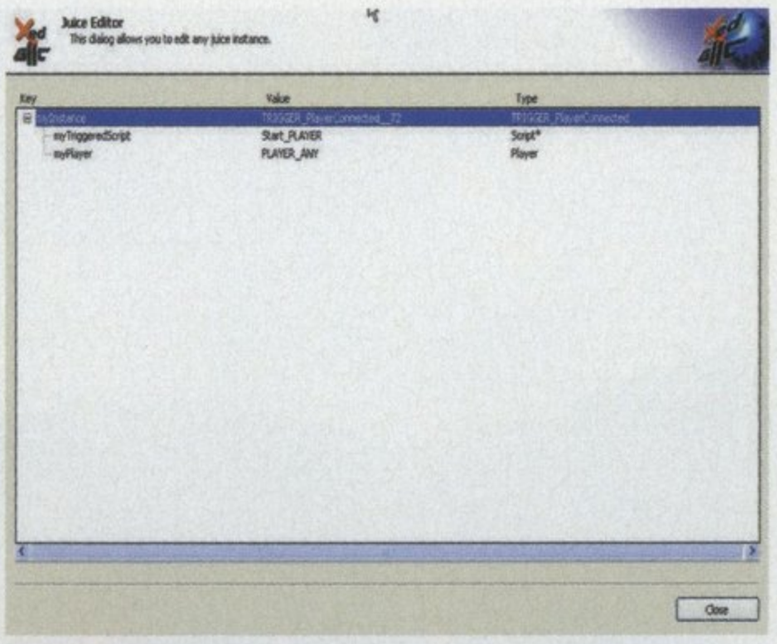
06 OBJECT ORIENTEERING

Let's get populating with the InstancePlace Tool. Clicking it brings up the Instances palette, which details the various types of object available. Props are what we'll be using mainly; Things have to be created by scripts, so we'll be avoiding those. Sounds are just that, and can be placed anywhere. Stick a few trees or plants down; trees provide cover to infantry, and genuinely alter the balance of power; think carefully about where you're going to put them.



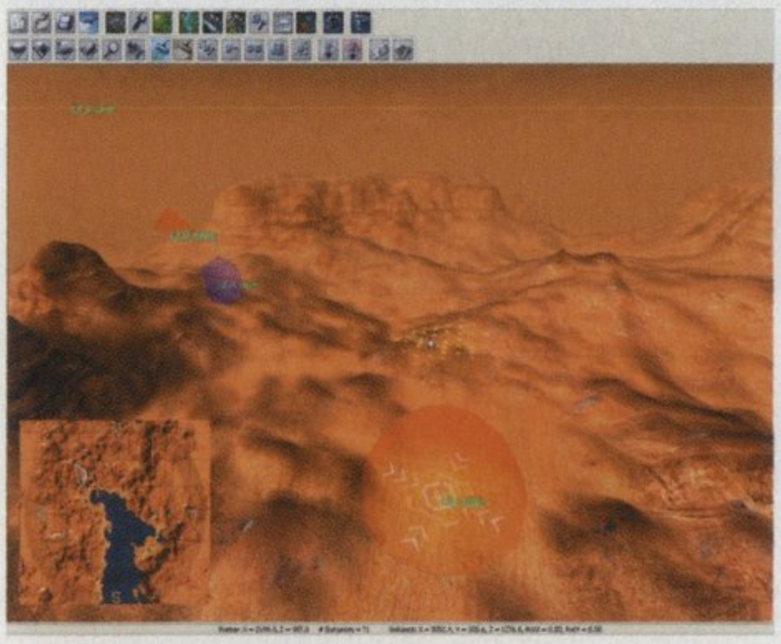
07 GOING UNDERGROUND

To get your map going we need some scripting. Click on the Scripts button. There's already a START script there; this runs when the map loads. Inside the START script will be the start Commands of any Things you placed. Create another script called ALL_PLAYERS_READY. Select the START script, find the TRIGGER_AllPlayersReady in the Commands list and double-click it to add it to the START script. Make it point to ALL_PLAYERS_READY.



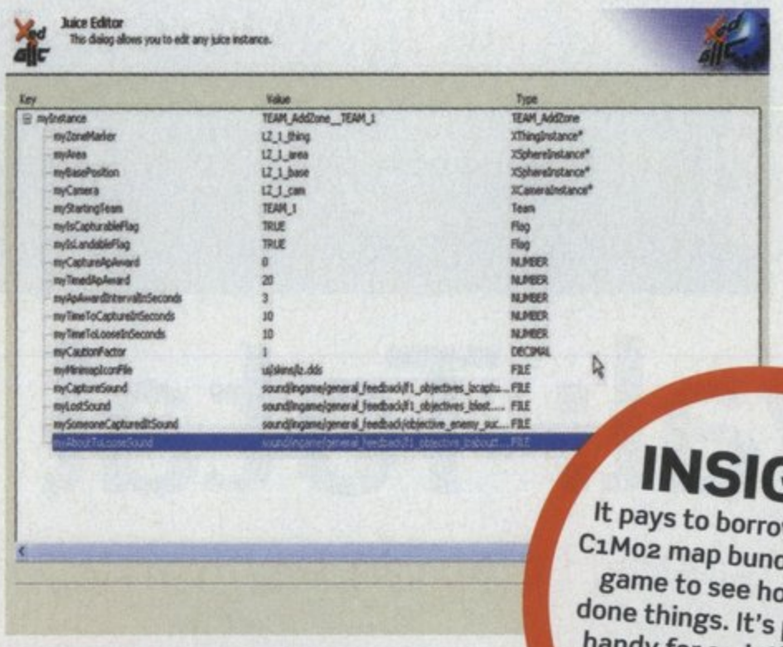
08 SCRIPTS AND BLOODS

Make a new script called PLAYER_CONNECTED and add a SCRIPT_ActivateScript command to START pointing at PLAYER_CONNECTED. Create a script called ZONES and have an activation script inside START point at this too. Create yet another script called Start_ PLAYER. Inside the PLAYER_CONNECTED script select the TRIGGER_Player Connected from the commands menu, have MyPlayer set to PLAYER_ANY and MyTriggeredScript set to Start_PLAYER.



09 LANDING ZONES

Use the InstancePlaceAreaTool to place an area about 47 units across. Rename it (in the instance pane) to LZ_1_area. Place a VL_thing in the same spot with InstancePlaceTool. (Found under Things > Global Prop Types.) Rename this LZ_1_thing. Place an area at the edge of the playfield and call it LZ_1_base. The dropship travels from here to the LZ. Find a good camera position over the LZ, click AddCameraPosition, rename the resulting camera LZ_1_cam.

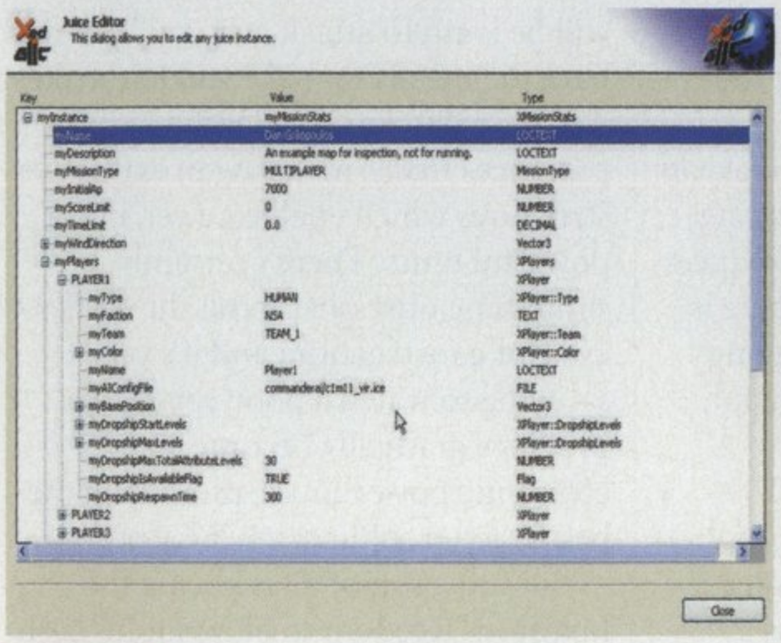


INSIGHT

It pays to borrow. Open the C1M02 map bundled with the game to see how they've done things. It's particularly handy for scripting tips and there's some extra notes about all this on the disc too.

10 ZONE OF THE ENDERS

Repeat that for however many teams you want on the battlefield. Back inside the ZONES script add a TEAM_AddZone command. Go through the options setting everything to the appropriate LZ_1 instance. Change MyIsLandableFlag to TRUE. Repeat for Team 2 etc. If you want to add Victory locations to the map, put them in this ZONES category too.



11 STICK TO THE SCRIPT

Inside Start_PLAYER add a SCRIPT_ActivateScript pointing to PLAYER_CONNECTED and a PLAYER_MoveCameraToLZ__1 (for the beginning of the game). Then add a OBJ_AddObjective_HumanObjective__1 and fill in the text fields. Finally, inside ALL_PLAYERS_READY add a WEATHER_SetWeatherEffect__1 and select a weather. Then add a TEAM_ChangeSoundTrack__1 to it, and select an MP3 for your combatants to fight to, and you're almost ready to go.

12 GROUND CONTROLLED TOO

Now simply open the Mission Stats window, and fill in the gaps. Set all the Players in MyPlayers to AI except 1 and 2 which should be Human. Choose an AI script for each player, even the humans, from the CommanderAI folder. Save the game again, click anywhere on the landscape and go File > Export to export it to the game mode. This should take about five to ten minutes. Now go into the game, into a LAN skirmish, and load up your map.

Design Law Debunked

Not a rule "The player must make a difference"

Dave Morris is lead designer at Elixir

Victor Mature. His performance as Doc Holliday in John Ford's My Darling Clementine is matchless. He's consumed by self-loathing and taking refuge in a bottle, but when his girlfriend is shot, Wyatt Earp sobers him up long enough to operate. It seems to go all right. Holliday glimpses a ray of hope. Maybe he could yet go back.

Then she dies. Off-screen. We only learn about it when Earp finds Holliday back in his dark place with the whiskey. And Ford thereby expresses the whole theme of fatalism that runs through the movie. Holliday can't change, he can't escape his destiny. It's the gunfight at the OK Corral as Shakespearean tragedy.

Then I got to thinking about "story-based" games. You race through a level bludgeoning enemies, only to arrive at the dock a minute too late. The ship has sailed, the bad guy has the girl and he's taunting you. After a long slog through many equally stage-managed scenarios, you'll finally get the chance to confront him and make up for failing there at the start.

If I'm being invited to interact with a story, surely I shouldn't be just jumping through the author's hoops?

There's a scene in an upcoming game. You're sent to either kill or rescue a character – your choice. But the story requires this character to die, so the publisher said, "If you rescue her, we'll have a cutscene at the end of the level where a stray bullet kills her."

I didn't like that, but what would John Ford have done with it? Most likely he'd build the game around the theme of inevitability. He wouldn't kill the character right there at the end of the level, he'd leave it till later. Crucially, he'd let your choice make a short-term difference even if not a long-term one.

The players don't have to be able to make a difference – just so long as they aren't ignored.

■ **This design column regularly appears in game development trade journal Develop**

Want to write a mod tutorial for PC GAMES ADDICT? Then contact:

dan@derwenthoward.com.au

Though cavalry are ostensibly your best units, charging them into the middle of an enemy formation is not a very good idea.

Smaller forts can be taken without siege equipment, but you'll lose plenty of men to enemy fire as you batter down the door.

When hostilities swing back and forth with tit-for-tat sieges, you can see how the Hundred Years' War lasted so long.

Medieval: Total War

Much better than *1920s: Pretty Much Peaceful*

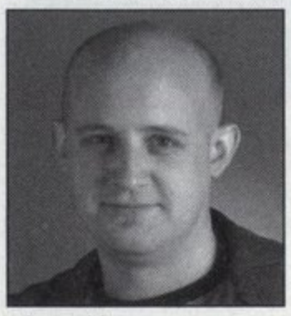
LONG PLAY

Medieval's strategy renaissance still going strong

Brains *and* beauty: that's always been *Total War*'s killer combination. For years we've been wowed by first *Shogun*'s, then *Medieval*'s and shortly *Rome*'s epic battlefield visuals. But with the passage of time, the other side of *Total War* has kept us enchanted, just as a fading beauty's charm and personality come to the fore once time and gravity take their effect.

Medieval's campaign map is at first a bewildering patchwork of colour, banners, boundaries and counters. Yet, deep in the depths of another month-long *Medieval* binge, I no longer see those symbols, instead visualising trade routes, marching armies, diplomatic stand-offs and tense borders. I suppose there's satisfaction in wrestling any game's systems into submission, but there's something particularly appealing and addictive about doing so in *Medieval.*

Want to see a classic game revisited in PC GAMES ADDICT? Mail your desires to:
dan@derwenthoward.com.au



Played by
Ross Atherton
Played For
Two years

Despite appearances, success in *Medieval* is as much a matter of financial cunning as martial prowess. Armies march on their wallets, and having massive regiments hanging about your provinces for decades on end puts a mighty drain on your coffers. Though neglecting to maintain your army is an invitation for your neighbours to attack. Naturally *Medieval* doesn't make it easy to rake in the cash. While the brute conquering, ransacking or exploitation of provinces earns a decent enough wedge, there is another way to have Europe begging for your mercy. Don't kick them out, buy them out.

Yes, trade is a more subtle and devious route to the top of the heap and offers empire-carving fun long after the appeal of the battles has waned. Constructing provincial trade buildings only ever provides a limited domestic income. The real money is made from international trade.

The potential income is massive if you build up the infrastructure to ship and trade your province's goods across Europe. A province can rake in several thousand florins with two or more trade goods, and even more with an astute General as governor.

Healthy cash flow gives you buying power. You can train and maintain armies almost at will, giving you a tactical map advantage as other nations will be loath to attack and you'll always have the means to make sudden strikes. Additionally, you can develop your provinces freely, investing in expensive structures which enable newer, more powerful units. There's certainly something obsessive about the endless cycle of construction; and it's very satifying to watch a poor, rebellious province gradually become an economic powerhouse, producing the best-trained soldiers in Christendom.

But most fun of all is having the luxurious freedom to blow suplus cash on the exorbitant bribes which most enemy and rebel Generals demand if you try to turn them to your side. Many a province has fallen to my devious Emissaries without a blade being swung in anger.

If that isn't enough to turn you into

When several nations' armies collide, alliances come into play and a dirty great battle ensues.

The feelthy Eenglish won't stand for long against my Almohad troops, inexperienced though they may be. God is on our side!

The European map features bottlenecks, allowing concentration of forces. Holding the Pyrenees is a favourite tactic.

a trader, a network of ships from Sweden to the Holy Land confers other advantages. At first, you'll be treated to an excellent view of other nations' activities, because ships act like floating spies, permitting a sly glimpse of activity in coastal provinces. Even better, your merchant navy can also transfer entire armies immediately across the map if there are no unfriendly fleets in the way, enabling massive surprise attacks.

The delicious Catch-22 in this trade-to-win strategy is that you can only trade with other friendly nations – not provinces you've subjugated, and certainly not those you're at war with. Worse, other nations can attack your trade routes if you're careless enough to declare war on them, or to allow them to declare war on you.

Picture the scene: from an unpromising start (ie, the Extreme difficulty setting), the Sicilians had managed to forge an empire spanning Europe. Everything was going swimmingly until those damn Spaniards, for apparently no reason other than jealousy and fear, decided to attack my trade ships around the Iberian peninsula. After decades of peaceful trade and vast incomes, I had lazily recruited enormous armies, financing risky takeovers of rebellious states and heavily subsidising new conquests. With my main trading partner suddenly turned into an enemy, and my supply lines sliced, my income spiralled from 20,000 to a *loss* of 10,000 per turn. Needless to say, I gave the Spanish an Inquisition they really weren't expecting.

My tirades against the Pope

Medieval ranks alongside *Civilization* in the speed stakes: the pair of them are the tortoises of the already languid strategy world. As with *Civ*, *Medieval*'s hook is a slow-building satisfaction gained from gradually gaining power, being faced with new challenges and overcoming them. That acid test of a truly great game has never been more true: boring your friends with anecdotes from your current obsession. Crusades, last-ditch defences, bloody sieges, betrayal, excommunication, assassination... Emperor Toose and King Gillen offer pub-time sympathy to my tirades against the Pope, revolting peasants and the fearsome might of the Mongols. They too know the pain of losing a province you've known, loved, and built a Master Armoury in.

Rome has already proven to offer even greater depth of strategic challenge on the campaign map, and as a result I'm more excited than a man of my age should be about a videogame, and even more jealous Dan won't part with the copy we were sent (*Muaha* -Ed). It's perhaps unsurprising that this element has come to the fore in *Medieval* as the battlefield visuals have lost their spark. But its capacity to grip even two years on is astonishing.

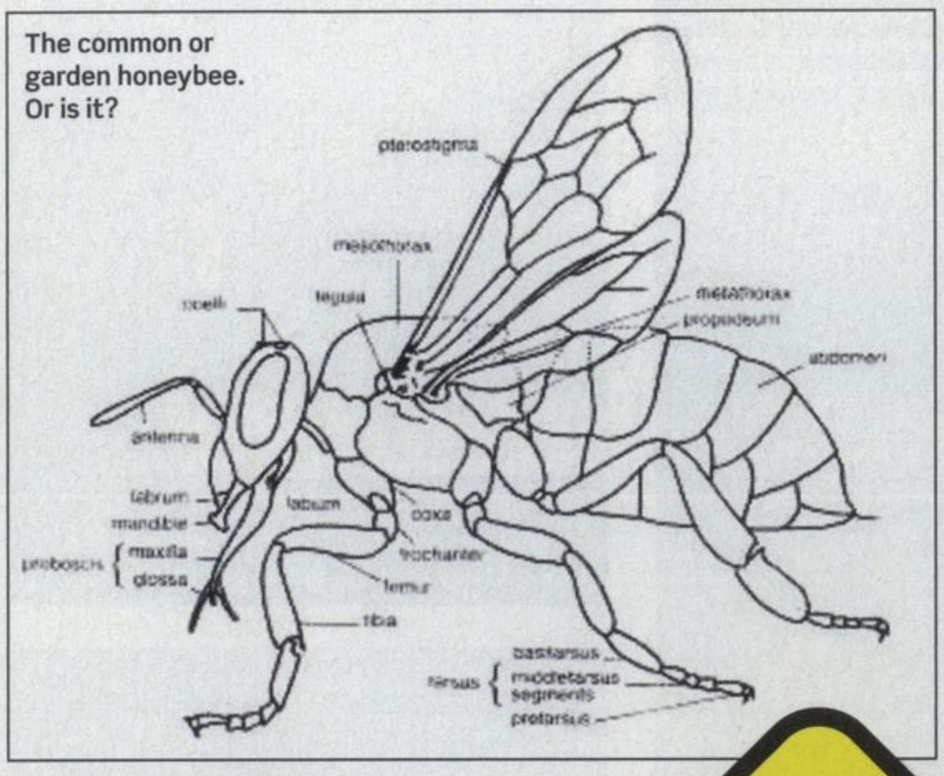
REVIEWS
MEDIEVAL
TOTAL WAR
It's time to forget about horse racing. This is the sport of kings.
Renaissance
"It's not a game that you take on lightly."

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

First review	PCGA 3, 93%
Why now?	In case you look bad in a toga...
Two-tiered strategy which tests and rewards all your big-brains cunning	

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Creative Assembly ■ **Requires** PII 350, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card ■ **Link** www.totalwar.com
■ **Community** www.totalwar.org ■ **Influenced by** Shogun, Civilization, Risk ■ **Spiritual successor** Rome: Total War



The common or garden honeybee. Or is it?

The sweet nectar of a rogue AI. Tasty.

CULTURE

Halo 2 creators obfuscate. With bees

PUZZLE

I love bees

Honey, I virally marketed the game

Bungie, the developers of *Halo*, want to play with your head. They've caused a buzz this month by embedding an almost subliminal message within their latest cinema-only trailer for *Halo 2*. The message simply reads **www.ilovebees.com**. It's a URL to a purportedly hacked beekeeping fan-site, 'Margaret's Honey'.

Any visitor to the site is immediately confronted with a countdown and a warning, "This medium is classified, and has a STRONG INTRUSIVE INCLINATION". Distributed throughout the pages are fragments of a story of a rogue AI, spiders and wombs. The deeper you dig, the more you learn – there are even fragments of text embedded within the binary fragments of the corrupted jpegs. Decoding the text, re-arranging the shards of story, is a game unto itself.

Outside of the site, an entire army of puzzle fiends, *Halo* devotees, and curious bystanders are deconstructing the story, deliberating over and searching for the next plot point. We've even taken to emailing the supposed owner of the site, for kicks. (STOP PRESS: Oh god, it's started to email us back. We're being stalked by an imaginary website.) For a head-start, visit the associated blog at **blogspot.ilovebees.com**.

■ www.ilovebees.com

BAWD GAMES

A GOOD HARD ROOK

Love Chess is computer chess with a new thrust. Instead of watching your pieces fight with swords as they take each other, as has been traditional since the ancient CGA graphics of *Battlechess*, you get to watch them take each other in an altogether more literal sense. Yes, the Bishops, Queens and Kings love each other very much. The animations, according to the makers, range from the "very tender to the very bizarre," while you can "watch the pieces make love from every angle." Great. An online mode is on the way ("Bishop to Queen 4... What are you wearing?") but as of now, the game is singleplayer only. Perfect for those lonely late knights.

■ www.lovechess.nl

What's happening in your gaming world?
Tell us your tales of gaming wonder...
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

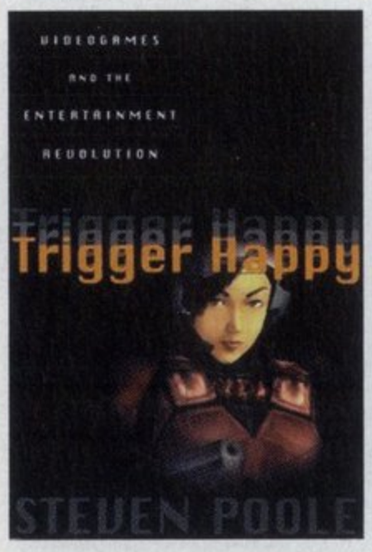
WORDS

Summer reading

Paper-based entertainment

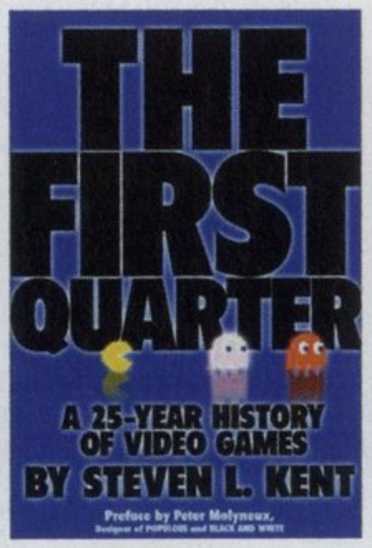
Reading this very mag proves your familiarity with both the written word and the polygon world of PC games. Augment both passions with one of these excellent takes on videogame culture.

■ www.amazon.com



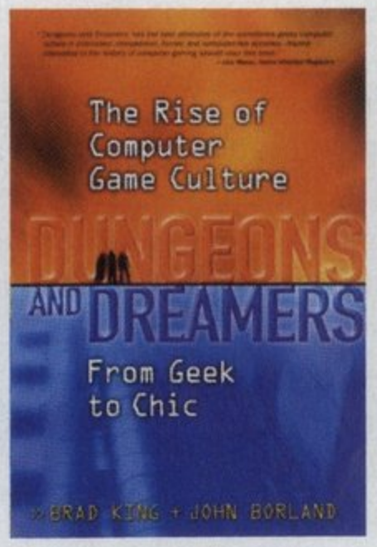
TRIGGER HAPPY

Author Stephen Poole
Notes Poole's obsession is with game theory and design, the nuts and bolts that create a virtual world. While Poole's examples tend toward console-centricity his theories are sound. Poole's major bugbear is coherency: how games rarely react as you'd expect. This is an academic piece, and the only place you'll find Plato's theories applied to PC games.



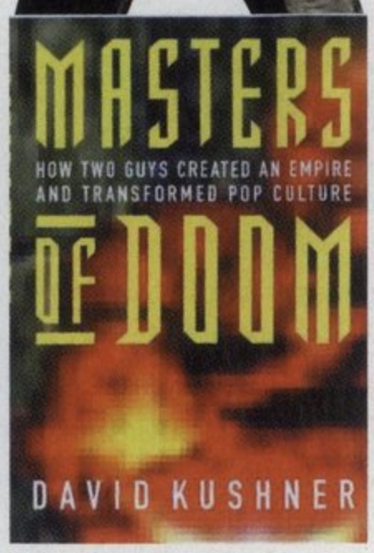
THE FIRST QUARTER

Author Stephen L Kent
Notes A detailed examination of the early business side of gaming, from the front lines. It's not as dry as you might think – ebullient businessmen rub shoulders with creative types such as Miyamoto, Wright and Garriot. The early days of Atari are hilariously documented: including that first trip to empty a *Pong* cabinet's coin tray.



DUNGEONS AND DREAMERS

Author Brad King and John Borland
Notes A carefully observed history of geek culture, documenting the influence of pen and paper RPGs on a whole generation of game developers. This is boyhood fantasy stuff, stories of kids birthing multi-million dollar worlds as after-school projects. The geeks didn't inherit the earth: they built it.



MASTERS OF DOOM

Author David Kushner
Notes This is the story of id, and how the Texan company transformed the PC into a viable gaming platform. Kushner pulls no punches: Carmack and Romero are both portrayed as nervous, near psychopathic figures, obsessed with creating a game that can take on console heavyweights such as Nintendo and Sega.

COMICS

Graphic novels

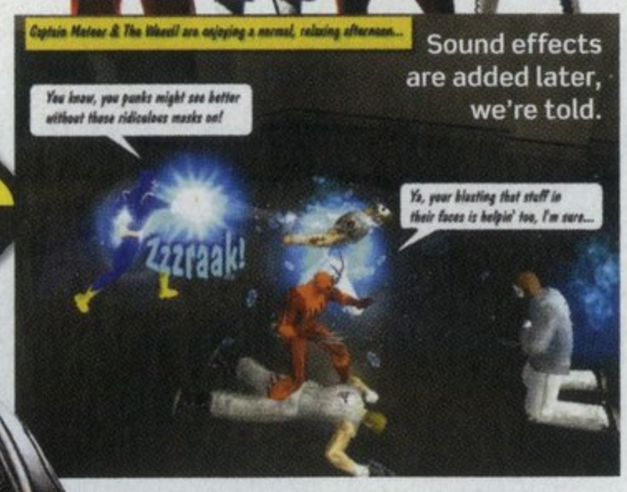
Paragon City Press

We all know that PC games are influenced by comic books. But players of superhero MMORPG *City of Heroes* are now repaying the compliment, by creating comics and illustrated stories based around the exploits and origins of their own characters.

At **www.cohcomics.com**, you'll find a virtual comicbook store, where players are free to create, post and critique. Within the racks, you'll find all manner of serialised stories, ranging from simple, straight-up tales of heroic derring-do, to parodies. Our favourite is simply called 'The Weevil'. It's a cautionary tale, describing the trials even a right-thinking justice fighter faces in a corporate-sponsored world. The pressure to choose a safe, nutritious and tasty breakfast cereal to endorse is immense: yet another reason for the faint-hearted villain-basher to consider hiring an agent.

Players use *City of Heroes* screenshots as illustrations, adding dialogue and thought bubbles to flesh out plot points. The completed stories are uploaded as flipbooks and left on the virtual shelves for little longer than a week. It's as disposable as web-publishing can get. You can even play along at home, with the officially endorsed *City of Heroes* Comics Collectable Card Game. Top trumps, for the spandex obsessed.

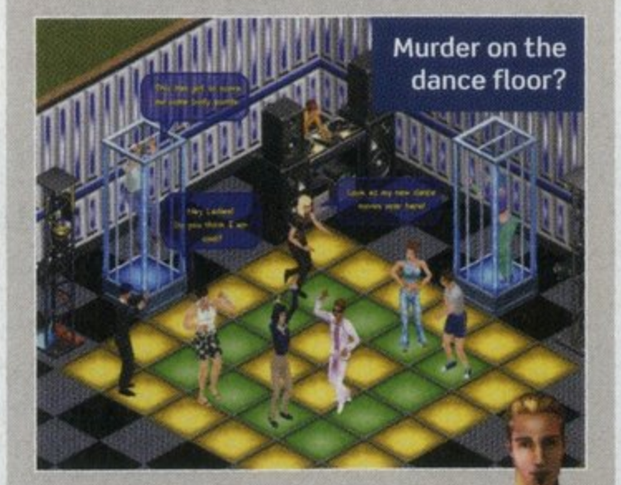
■ www.cohcomics.com


Captain Meteor & The Weevil are enjoying a normal, relaxing afternoon...
You know, you punks might see better without those ridiculous masks on!
Sound effects are added later, we're told.
zzzraak!
Ya, your blasting that stuff in their faces is helpin' too, I'm sure...

A new animation process: Supermachinimation.

GANGLAND

MAFIOSO RETIRES



JC Soprano, notorious head of the *Sims Online* crime syndicate, has announced his retirement. In a letter to the Alphaville Herald, JC attempted to quash the rumours of electoral fraud, claiming that he played no part in the scandal that almost brought down the Alphaville government, as reported in PCGA 24. That's small fry in comparison to his latest claims.

"My group's dealings with the Alphaville Government (AVG) go back far," says JC. "We have been hired by the AVG to take out opponents... hell we even paid for the Alphaville Jail in exchange for a get out of jail free card, if you will. The AVG is corrupt; it's as simple as that. Mr. President may have been running the AVG, but my group and myself were the puppet masters."

Soprano has already set up shop in another game, *Star Wars: Galaxies*, where he has a 'guild' established. Look out, Jedi. The real Dark Side is coming.

■ www.swgmafia.com

WHY I LOVE...

›Game Halo **›Gamer** Craig Pearson **›Love affair** Level Exploits

BACKING UP THE BANSHEE

A bird's-eye view you were never meant to see

Halo. Infinity. A huge figure-of-eight cut into rock. It's a tall multiplayer level, built for manoeuvring Banshees, the screeching, highly controllable Covenant aircraft. It's also slightly broken: one slip of a developer's mouse has left accessible a small section on top of the level, right over the Blue Base. It's a small curve of rock that the developers forgot to wrap an invisible wall around. But it lets you own the level, when combined with *Halo*'s wonderful long-range weaponry.

It takes a little public humiliation to get there, though. Back a Banshee up the cliff face, flying in reverse, slowly scouring the rear end of the ship over the rock. At the top, a small curve of rock gives just enough room to push the Banshee over, underneath the invisible roof of the level.

The next bit only works because of the Banshee's design: the Chief exits from the rear of the plane. It's the exit that's important, as the Chief leaps out the back, throwing himself straight back from the protruding rear of the plane and onto the ledge. The Banshee falls to the ground, and you're left with an offensively and defensively-perfect sniper position to cover or destroy the base from. Evil snicker.

ON THE DVD Craig and Tom walk you through a group of Infinity's exploitable flaws. Learn how to fall without dying, and how to hide in plain sight > Movies

1 REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

It's the exit that sets you up, with the Chief darting out from the rear of the plane. You have to keep reversing the Banshee as you leave the cockpit, as it's all too easy to crash back to ground. You do run the risk of losing your craft to an enemy while doing this, but we have ways of taking them on.

2 BETTER BLOCKER

You're vulnerable up here, if noticed. But anyone trying to ram you in a Banshee is in for a surprise: the front end doesn't fit under the invisible roof, so a well-timed dodge will result in the Banshee pilot lodging it right in front of you. It leaves you with an all-too-easy target to bring to a fiery end.

EXPERT ADVICE ON MONITORS

Why it's time to join the LCD revolution

BY HARDWARE EDITOR: JERE LAWRENCE & HENRY TUCKER

For years gamers have had to put up with bulky, ugly monitors. Today we're on the threshold of a new golden age. Wafer-thin LCD monitors have fallen in price and now any gamer can afford to add one to their armoury. Apart from their sexy, future-technology looks, there are other reasons for making the transition. LCD monitors take up less space than a traditional CRT. They use less power and emit a lot less radiation, making them kinder to your eyes during marathon sessions. A good 17-inch LCD now costs around $670, the equivalent of a 19-inch CRT. But which is the wisest choice for gamers?

The CRT monitor may be long-toothed, but it still offers a sharp picture which is ideal for the fast-moving images found in movies and games. And CRTs have always boasted a higher resolution than equivalent LCDs, making them the game window of choice. However, the decision is no longer clear cut.

While a CRT display is made up of lines of light, an LCD image is made up of lines of liquid crystal, which then have light shone through them. But the image can look blocky or pixelated unless there are a lot of these lines packed in tightly. What's more, the image's constituent pixels must be able to change colour and turn on and off at high speed. Otherwise, , movement looks stilted.

On a poor LCD, the blacks look more like greys

This process is known as the response time. High response times have been the stumbling block for LCD monitors as they have evolved, but it's something that makers are now addressing.

As a rule, the lower the response time the better the monitor. Times do vary, the lowest we've seen so far is a reported 12 milliseconds. Play a first-person shooter on anything higher than 25ms and you're going to notice it. The image won't change fast enough and you'll get blurring or ghosting as it shifts. This is particularly the case in games with low light scenarios such as *Splinter Cell*, and in twitch shooters such as *Unreal Tournament 2004*. Sharp movements will look blurred and the overall feel of the game will be affected. This really wasn't a major problem with the monitors we tested (see overleaf) as they all had response times under 20ms. If you're a tournament FPS player your pro-gaming eye may convince you that your frag count is suffering even at 20ms. However, with that kind of response time a good LCD will stand up over prolonged FPS play. If you're an RTS player on the other hand, response time isn't a major issue.

The display resolution is the next feature to scrutinise. This is the number of pixels that compose the image. The more pixels you have, the sharper your image will be. Screen resolution is measured by the amount of pixels horizontally by the amount vertically, ie 1024x768 or 1280x1024. LCDs have a maximum resolution and a 'native' resolution. This is the optimum resolution for the screen and the resolution you should try to run it at. You can have the screen set to a higher or lower resolution if you wish, but the image won't be as sharp. You can expect a 17 inch LCD to reach 1280x1024 – and you really shouldn't settle for anything less. Higher is better, of course, but anything over 1280x1024 and your desktop icons shrink to Lilliputian size and strain the eyes.

Aside from response time, another area where the LCD has traditionally suffered in comparison with the CRT is the contrast ratio – the difference between light and dark

CONTROLS
Setting up an LCD is quicker than a CRT as you don't need to make changes to the position of the image on screen, or make any other changes such as keystone correction. Almost all LCDs have an auto-adjust feature that sets the image centrally and at the native resolution.

STAND
LCD panels are easier to position than bulky CRTs as their stands provide much more choice of movement. They can often be raised, tilted and some can even be rotated from landscape to portrait position.

BEZEL
LCDs are a lot thinner than CRTs and take up a lot less room. They also use less power, making them more environmentally friendly. Also, if you want to carry your monitor around, to LAN parties for example, LCDs are much lighter.

SYSTEMS README

›**WHY AM I HERE?** Because we're going to cut through all the jargon so you can make the right screen choice

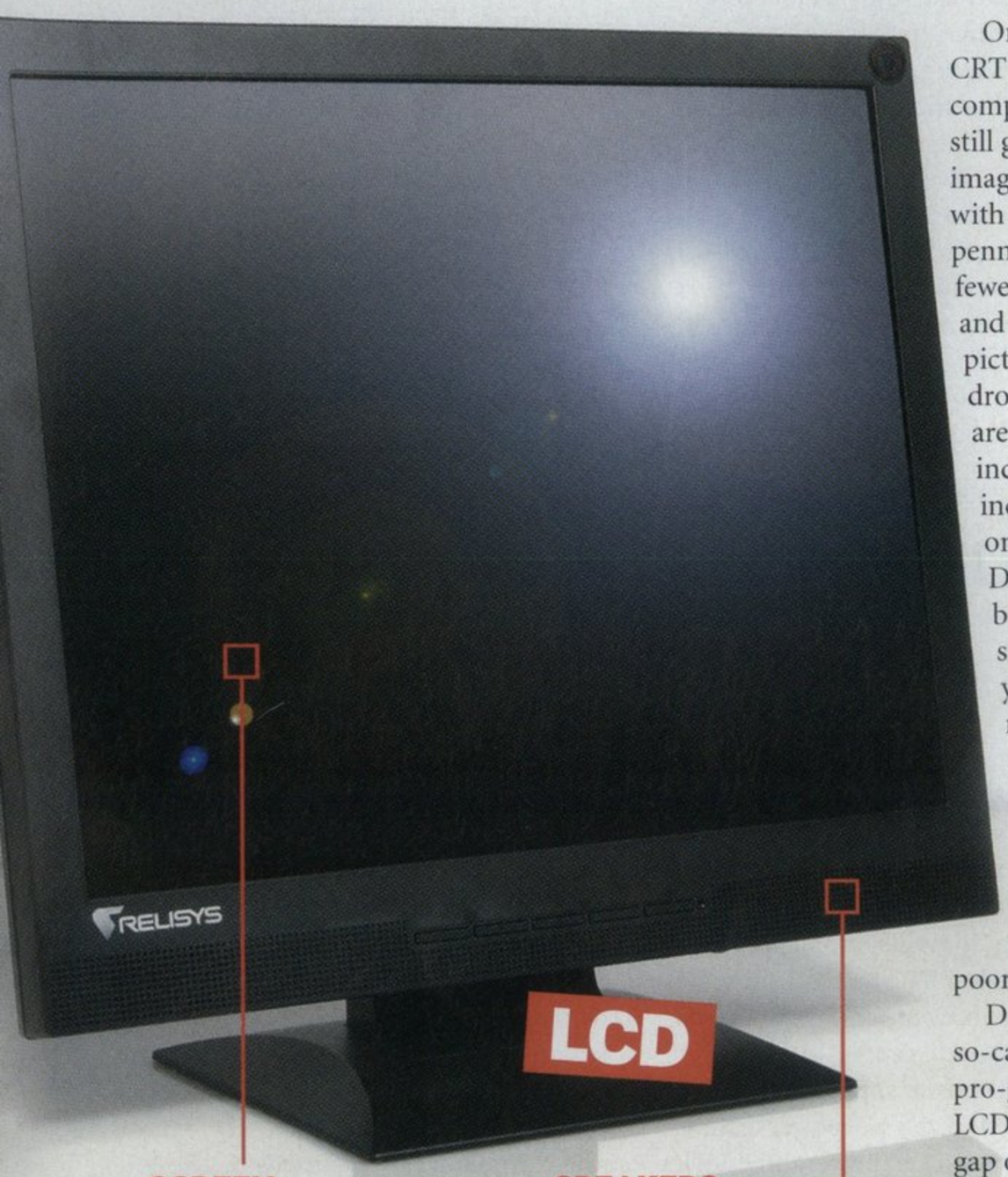
›**RISK FACTOR?** Make the wrong choice and you'll...

›**IS IT EASY?** With our tips, finding the right monitor will be like

›**SELL IT TO ME...** What's the point playing the latest games if you can't see them in all their glory?

PC GAMES ADDICT DICTIONARY THE OED OF GAMING

Resolution › The height and width dimensions of the image. Measured in pixels x pixels.
Response time › Time in milliseconds it takes the strands of liquid crystal to turn on and off.
Contrast ratio › The difference in intensity between the brightest white and darkest black.
Brightness › The brighter the screen the better the image, look for the highest number.
TFT: Thin film transistor › This is a fairly new technology that is incorporated into many new screens, improving screen resolution by using transistors to control the pixels on screen. Also called active matrix.
Refresh Rate › Measured in hertz (Hz) this is the number of times a second the screen updates the image it is displaying. The higher the better, so as to avoid eyestrain and headaches. Refresh rate is as important to LCD screens as it is with CRTs.



SCREEN
LCD screens have developed fast over the past few years. The major development came with the introduction of TFT – Thin Film Transistors – a technology that almost all new screens use.

SPEAKERS
While handy, these aren't as good as standalone ones, so don't buy a monitor simply because it has integrated speakers. It's smarter to spend your money on a better screen and get these separately.

One of the benefits of a CRT is that you can compromise on price and still get a decent quality image. This isn't the case with a LCD. Saving on the pennies will often mean fewer lines, lower resolution and therefore a poorer picture. But prices are dropping and specifications are rising, and a good 17-inch screen – or even a 19-inch – should be creeping onto gamers' wish lists. Don't be bamboozled by built-in extras such as speakers, and ensure you're getting a fast response time and a decent native resolution. The rest will be patently obvious – a good screen will have a good sharp image. There's no disguising poor image quality.

Despite what any so-called expert or pro-gamer will tell you, LCDs really are closing the gap on CRTs when it comes to gaming.

A high quality screen will not only look the part on your desktop, it will breeze through RTS or RPG games without breaking into a sweat, and can handle anything that the likes of *Half-Life 2* or *Doom 3* can throw at it.

Follow our liquid crystal-clear advice and you can't go far wrong.

Want a tech topic covered?
Then mail your request to:
jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

colours. On a poor LCD the blacks look more like greys – a major problem if you're hoping to play shadowy games like *Splinter Cell*, or *Unreal Tournament 2004* where the lights are dim and you're moving very fast.

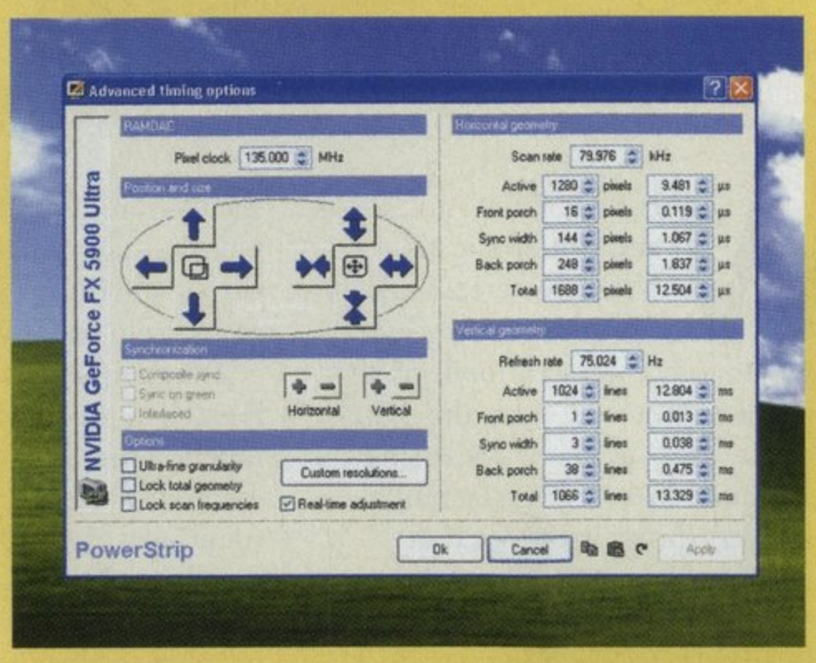
Naturally, gamer's desire the highest contrast ratio possible from a LCD monitor, around 500:1. At lower settings, darker colours tend to merge into each other and images that rely on colours for definition don't look as they will on a CRT monitor.

WHAT NEXT...?

› Unless you're competing in clan matches each week, you can consider replacing that CRT without fearing loss of performance.
› **If you're not playing first-person shooters regularly then it's really a no brainer. Your CRT's days should be numbered.**
› Start saving. If you have set your heart on an LCD, scrimping won't pay off when you go shopping.
› **Win Lotto so you can buy a really expensive projector and ignore all this!**

MASTERCLASS

How to... Set up your monitor



1 **Be sure to install whatever configuration software that came with your monitor. For further tweakery a useful shareware application that you can download is PowerStrip (www.soft32.com). This has all manner of tools that allow you to not only alter your display by changing the colours but also has a feature that allows you to tweak your display properties for specific games if you want to.**

2 **Go into Display properties › Advanced › Monitor, where you will see the model name of your display. By default, Windows sets the refresh rate at 60Hz which isn't high enough and is less than VESA, the Video Electronics Standards Association, recommend. VESA suggest that you should set the refresh rate to 75Hz – in order to avoid all that unpleasant and unnecessary flickering from the ol' monitor.**

3 **Often when you install a new graphics card or drivers Windows changes your screen resolution to the minimum. Combat this by right clicking the desktop and selecting Properties and then Settings. If your monitor is installed properly then Windows won't let you up the resolution beyond the maximum and native resolution. Otherwise it's a case of adjusting by trial and error. If it looks right then it probably is.**

Easy but complex DYNALINK WIRELSESS ADSL ROUTER RTA 770W $279

Altech www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655

What is it about Australians and communicating? Not only were we one of the first countries in the world to fully embrace mobile phone technology but we still top the charts when it comes to phone ownership per capita. Given this Aussie trait is it any surprise that we excel at manufacturing modems and these days, integrated routers. Dynalink is one such Australian company which has been around since 1989, back when 2400 baud was fast.

ADSL routers are all the rage nowadays and the RTA770W has all the standard features plus a lot more. It's a broadband modem and router along with a four port switch for wired Ethernet plus full 54Mbps wireless connectivity. For novice users setup is made easy through the use of configuration software that with the provision of a login ID and a password automatically configures the router to connect to the ISP and share the connection.

More advanced options are accessible by connecting to the router's web page which is efficiently designed and easy to navigate. A vast range of useful functions are on offer such as static and dynamic routing plus firewall configuration and access to logs and information regarding the connection and traffic on the network.

For gaming, this Dynalink router is excellent due to the number of functions on offer to get everything working. Ports can be forwarded the traditional way but a new function called Port Triggering allows for temporary rule changes such as opening a range of ports when certain conditions are met. When gaming, this function could be the difference between getting online or not. In worst case scenarios a single machine on the network can be setup as a Demilitarised zone (DMZ) a virtual direct connection that ensures at least one machine will be able to play online. It does however seem strange that given the depth of functionality this router offers there aren't any manual or automated parental controls. The kids will love it.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 88%
VALUE 82%
86%
›For both the novice and the hardcore

KEY FEATURES
- **Automated seteup**
- 802.11G 54Mbps
- **Good for Gaming**
- Excellent Functionality

RAM it in CORSAIR XMS2 DDR2 MEMORY $660

Altech www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655

Two months after the release of PCI Express we're starting to see the emergence of DDR2 memory which has successfully entered the market without the dramas. After the flawed release of RDRAM in which a lack of supply pushed memory prices way up Intel were very careful this time around to make sure that memory manufacturers had steady supply levels before releasing its new technology. This has had the very beneficial result that DDR2 memory is only about 25% more expensive than DDR memory but runs 133MHz faster.

The Corsair kit comes with two 512MB memory modules that are perfectly matched to ensure compatibility in a dual channel setup and currently DDR2 memory runs at 533MHz but 667Mhz and 800Mhz memory is already on the drawing board. One particular advantage to Corsair memory is that they cover their RAM modules in a heat spreader which makes overclocking particularly easy.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 85%
VALUE 74%
79%
›New tech that won't break the bank

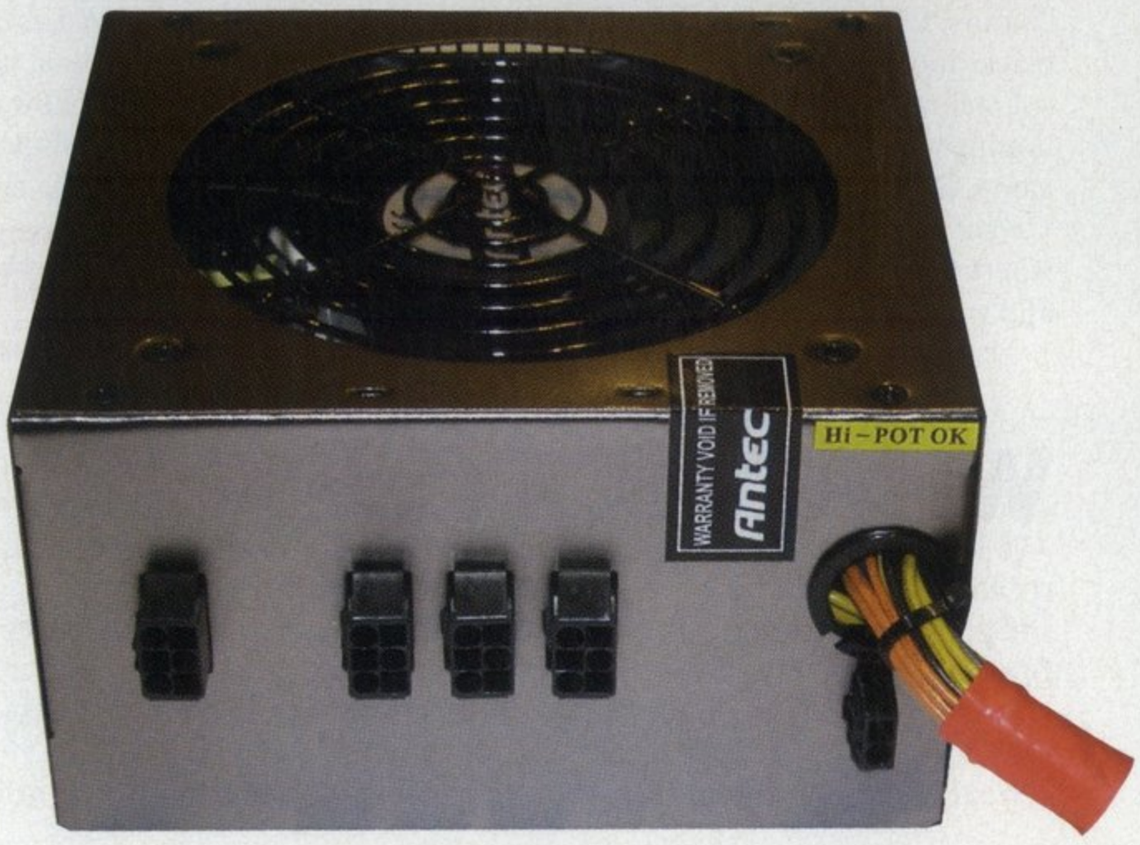
Ultimate Connectivity ANTEC NEO POWER 480W PSU $242

Altech www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655

No matter how much care is taken when building a PC the spaghetti mess of wires emerging from the power supply remains a less than aesthetic item but the solution, as Antec has discovered, is actually quite simple. Instead of having the power supply's connectors hard wired in, the Neopower features four ports that can power three Molex connectors each. The first significant advantage to this is that there will never be loose, unused power connectors in your case that need to be tied up. The other advantage is that connector types can be interchanged and combinations of SATA, Molex and fan power connectors can be used. There's also a PCI Express video power connector for high end solutions.

Outputting 480W and compliant with the ATX12V specification this PSU not only has enough power for hungry video cards and hard disks but does so 25% more efficiently than non compliant power supplies.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 87%
VALUE 70%
75%
›An attractive and efficient power solution



Just too big
SAPPIRE X800 PRO TOXIC $899

Achieva www.achieva.com (02) 9742 3288

It's really quite ironic that after praising ATi for their X800 range which used a more graceful single slot solution over its competitor that Taiwanese based Sapphire have released a X800 Pro that takes up three PCI slots.

The new procedure in creating affordable electronics now that overclocking is so widely accepted is to whack on a massive heat sink and overclock a lesser GPU to much higher performance levels. This however isn't necessarily a something for nothing situation because the sheer girth of the Toxic means that installing it into your system can be quite a challenge due to numerous points of interference such as memory location and hard disk.

Performance wise the Toxic with no overclocking achieved a healthy 3D Mark of 8659 which is about 4% faster than an X800 Pro reference board. Called the Automated Performance Enhancer or APE, this application is supposed to milk every last ounce of performance out of the video card by dynamically adjusting core and memory speeds. In practice we found that the Toxic in this mode achieved a 3D Mark of 8980, 4% faster again and a grand total of 8% faster than the reference board overall. Skilled overclockers could probably squeeze even more performance out of it by not relying on the application but this increase isn't really significant enough to warrant the sacrifice of three PCI slots. At least the card still only requires power from one 5.25" Molex connector.

Full video capture capabilities are included which means that you can watch a video source such as TV while using your PC. The bundled software is quite good and includes PowerDirector, PowerDVD, *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* and *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow.*

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 85%
VALUE 70%

›Moderate gain for the price of 3 slots

80%

KEY FEATURES

- **›256MB memory**
- ›R420 GPU
- **›Inhabits three PCI slots**
- ›VIVO abilities

Don't read the mag sideways, people will think it's prOn...

64-bit me
MSI K8N NEO2 PLATINUM $290

MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070

AMD's 64-bit solution remains popular and the choice of chipsets gives manufacturers greater flexibility in their design. In the case of the K8N Neo 2 Platinum, it uses nVIDIA's nforce3 chipset which performs well but more importantly is produced more cheaply due to the resources and finances available to such a big company.

Referred to as a Socket-939 solution this means that the motherboard is compatible with the AMD Athlon64 3500+, 3800+ and the 64 FX 53. Memory support is excellent and up to 4GB can be installed over four banks. As virtually all motherboards feature dual channel memory support these days it's advisable to try and purchase identical memory modules to avoid compatibility issues.

Support for up to four SATA devices that are usable in a RAID configuration is pretty standard but the location of the ports on this motherboard isn't. Down below where SATA ports are normally found there's only two because the other two are located to the northwest of the CPU socket. Depending on case this could be a problem due to the commonly short length of SATA cables. RAID is further supported over two ATA133 ports for another four devices which can be setup in modes 0, 1, 0+1 and JBOD (just a bunch of disks).

The Realtek ALC850 audio chip is featured on board and produces 7.1 channel surround sound either through 3.5mm mini jacks or the far more elegant SP/DIF optical solution that only uses one cable. External I/O is well catered for with two 1 gigabit Ethernet inputs and a back panel with three Firewire ports. Four USB 2.0 ports reside on the back ATX panel and the inputs for another four ports are available on the motherboard so a front panel can be connected up. Being an MSI product it ships with their standard set of automated overclocking tools that are a great way for inexperienced or busy users to get the most out of their system.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 82%
VALUE 85%

›A solid 64-bit nForce3 based motherboard

83%

Dust for prints
BIOFLASH 128MB DRIVE $150

Anyware www.anyware.com.au (02) 9879 5788

Here's an interesting take on the now ordinary flash drive, especially for the security conscious, fingerprints. Using an integrated biometric camera, the flash drive allows access to the 128MB of data inside only after the owner's fingerprint has been verified.

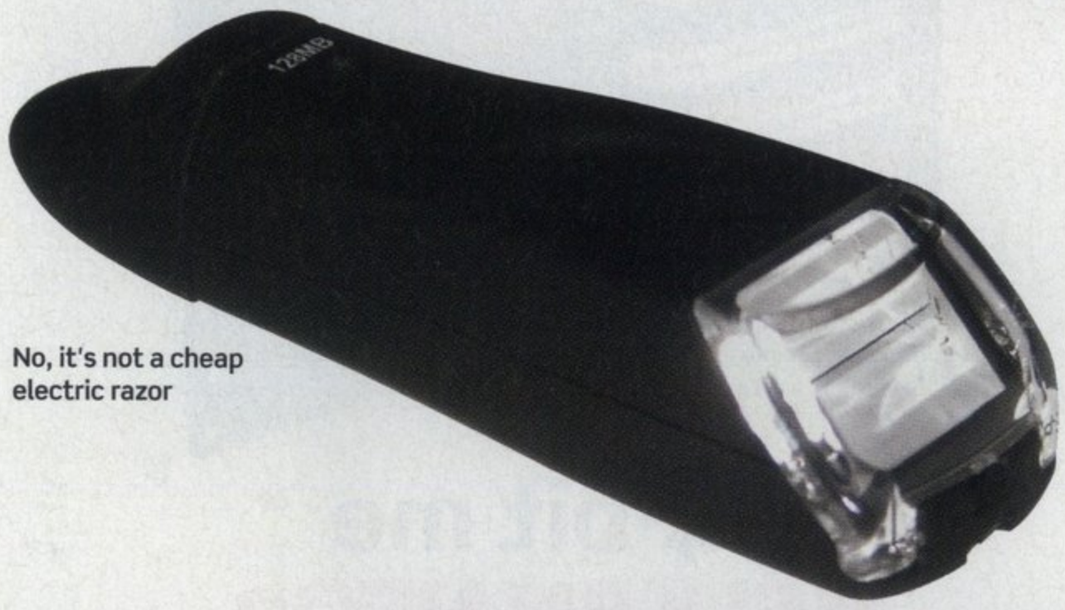
Setup is relatively easy and involves only the installation of the provided driver. Once this step is completed, plugging the flash drive into a USB port will trigger the security functions. The first time the drive is used you will need to store the fingerprint that will unlock the device. For obvious reasons great care should be taken and the manual consulted as to how to hold your finger against the sensor. Our advice is to set a text based rescue password until comfortable with the fingerprinting process because in testing it was found that it helps to develop a consistent technique for fingerprint identification.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 88%
VALUE 68%

77%

›Secure your data, biologically



No, it's not a cheap electric razor

Sleight of hand
12-IN-1 CARD READER $39

Anyware www.anyware.com.au (02) 9879 5788

No wonder the average consumer holds a healthy amount of scepticism when it comes to marketing because of instances like this. This card reader definitely supports 12 card types, just not 12 different card types. To explain, there's support for Compact Flash I and II, MemoryStick (Pro, Duo and Pro Duo), Secure Digital and Mini Secure Digital, MMC (small and large) and IBM Microdrive. The reality here is that there are only five unique card formats supported and it's somewhat of a stretch to include MemoryStick Duo support. This is because the Duo (a shortened version of the MemoryStick) comes with an adaptor allowing it to be used in a MemoryStick slot anyway.

On the more positive side the unit is small measuring in at 80mm (W) x 60mm (D) x 17mm (H) and attractively finished to look like brushed aluminium. Fully USB 2.0 compliant, data is transferred from card to PC at the maximum transmission rate.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 71%
VALUE 85%

78%

›The name is a little bit misleading.

Not so much a gamer's item but handy for digital media

Keeping it simple
ANTEC SLK-2650 MID POWER CASE $139

Altech www.altech.com (02) 9735 5655

The plethora of mod-friendly cases that are now available are great for the enthusiast user but not much help when a simple but attractive solution is required. Constructed using the standard steel alloy and covered in a black powder coat the Antec Mid tower case, to make use of a cliché, goes with anything.

Being a mid tower case the SLK-2650 moderately sized and measures in at 420mm (H) x 220mm (W) x 420mm (D) and working it is easy as there are thumbscrews that allow for easy removal of the side panel. Airflow is well catered for and a 120mm exhaust fan can keep a large volume of air moving plus there's an interesting adjustable funnel attached to the removal side panel so that you can direct airflow directly over the CPU. Up top there are four 5.25" bays for optical devices that use screw-less drive rails, i.e. you screw a metal bracket onto your 5.25" device which then allows it to be locked into the bay. A removable 3.5" bay can house a Floppy drive along with two hard disks that mount far enough apart so as not to affect each other from heat build up. The case also comes with an Antec 350W power supply which is functional but basic. This is said because it doesn't feature the newer PCI Express video plug or even serial ATA power connectors.

The front is kept equally simple with no pop up panel to speak of just two conveniently located USB ports. One feature that did impress us was a clip on "toolbox" attached to the back that is used to contain screws and essential items for the PC.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 68%
VALUE 87%

73%

›Attractive in its simplicity

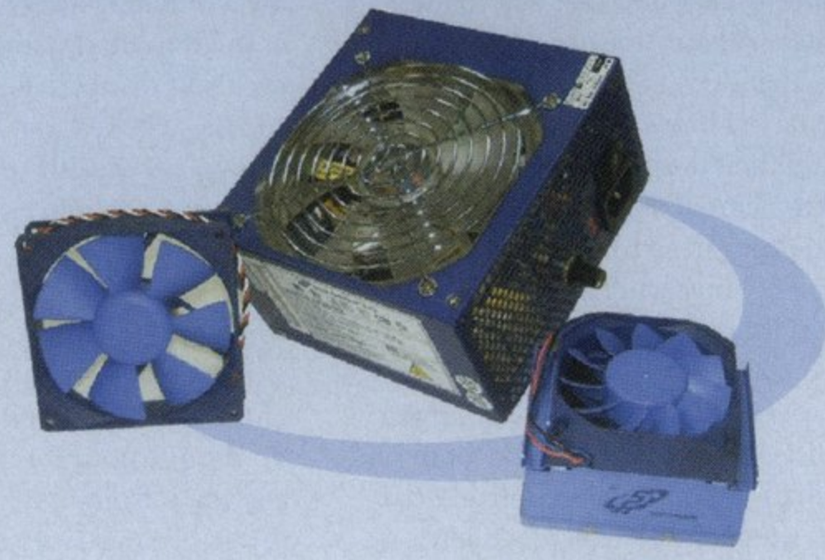
KEY FEATURES

›420mm (H) x 220mm (W) x 420mm(D)
›350W power supply
›Four 5.25" bays
›Eour 3.5" bays

FSP-KIT350

Available in 350W

- ❑ Silent System Solution (3 in 1)
- ❑ Includes Power Supply, CPU Cooler & Case Fan
- ❑ Available for AMD K7, K8 and Intel P4 processors



FSP-400PFC

Available: 400W

- ❑ Super quiet
- ❑ Silent 12cm fan
- ❑ Intel ATX 12V compatible
- ❑ Complete output protection
- ❑ Meets international safety standards
- ❑ Supports Pentium 4 at GHz and AMD XP CPUs

FSP-NB90

Universal Notebook Adapter

- ❑ AC input: 100-240V (worldwide) 1.6A, 50/60Hz
- ❑ Compatible with 19V input notebooks, up to a current of 4.74A, 90W max.
- ❑ 6 DC output tips for maximum compatibility
- ❑ High efficiency with complete circuit protection
- ❑ High quality assurance
- ❑ Patented input fuse protection

For compatible notebook list, visit our website

FSP - Your Power Source

Anyware™ COMPUTER ACCESSORIES
www.anyware.com.au
www.anywarenz.co.nz

SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	PERTH	ADELAIDE	BRISBANE	AUCKLAND
TEL: 02-9879 5788	TEL: 03-9763 8200	TEL: 08-9242 8588	TEL: 08-8347 0488	TEL: 07-3856 3999	TEL: 64-9-634 8088
FAX: 02-9879 5388	FAX: 03-9763 8400	FAX: 08-9242 8688	FAX: 08-8347 0466	FAX: 07-3856 1777	FAX: 64-9-634 8078

Ultimate heat sink
PC FRIDGE KIT $57.50

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

You're fragging up a storm, it's your best score ever and you've nailed your toughest foe every time. But oh no, dehydration threatens to steal your winning edge and that trip to the fridge will only mean certain defeat. No, that doesn't sound like any scenario I know of either but hey, if it did then this fridge kit would be pretty damn handy. And all kidding aside running a fridge off your PC certainly meets the flamboyance of a good mod.

Installation is process that first involves installing a cigarette lighter panel onto your PC. This is no more difficult than fitting an optical drive and simply involves screwing in a front panel and plugging a Molex connector into it. This done, it's just a matter of plugging the fridge into the lighter input just like in a car.

The fridge is constructed of hard plastic with a decent enough handle that keeps the door locked tight. Externally the fridge is 270mm (H) x 185mm (W) x 250mm (D). Internal capacity is 2 litres and dimensioned in such a way that you can definitely fit six cans of whatever your favourite beverage is in there. Bottles though are a different story as it's not tall enough to fit, say, imported beers or even soft drinks. Alternatively the unit can be switched to heat things up, which is obviously useful for keeping those cups of coffee warm or heating your pies.

It's not all plug and play though as some mild maintenance does need to be applied. Due to the small size of the motor the unit must be turned off for one hour every forty eight to prevent it from blowing. Otherwise this fridge rates very highly on the novelty scale.

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION
EASY

›A fridge for the price of two cases of beer

75%

Desktop glitz
THERMALTAKE GAMMA PAD $37.50

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

To date USB mouse pads that use LEDs to light up the base have all looked great but ironically lacked a surface that was particularly good for using a mouse on. Thankfully this is about to change due to the release of the Thermaltake Gamma Pad which uses a rubber/polymer surface similar to that of the Func1030. This surface is excellent for gaming as it offers precision when the mouse is moved slowly yet doesn't resist faster motions when the mouse is being used in more tense situations.

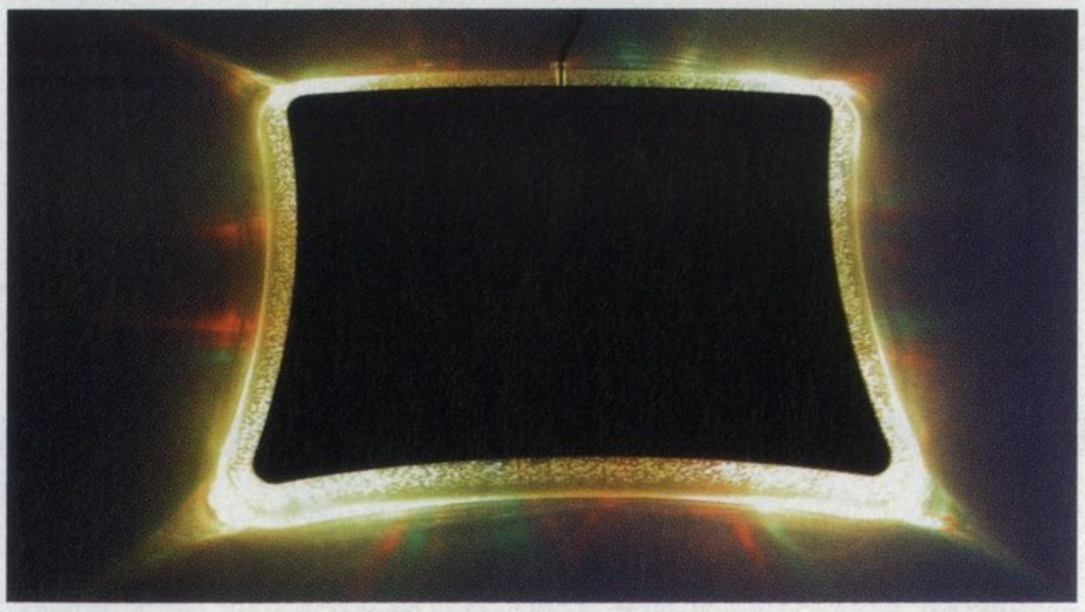
The LED effects are also well above par and reflect Thermaltake's usual quality because instead of just one LED that lights up, there are seven. With the push of a button you can choose from blue, red, golden, purple, light blue, pink and green lights or to cycle through all of them.

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION
EASY

›Looks great and performs glowingly

83%



Hard Core
DDR VOLTAGE OVERCLOCKER $95

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

Once upon a time the only factor in the ability to overclock a system came from either the jumpers on the motherboard or changing settings in the BIOS. But now there's a new way, good ol' fashioned brute force. The principle is simple, plug the DDR booster in and turn a pot to increase memory voltage and therefore speed. Installation is however a little more involved and requires plugging two 5.25" Molex connectors into the booster module and then replacing the ATX power to the motherboard with the provided connector.

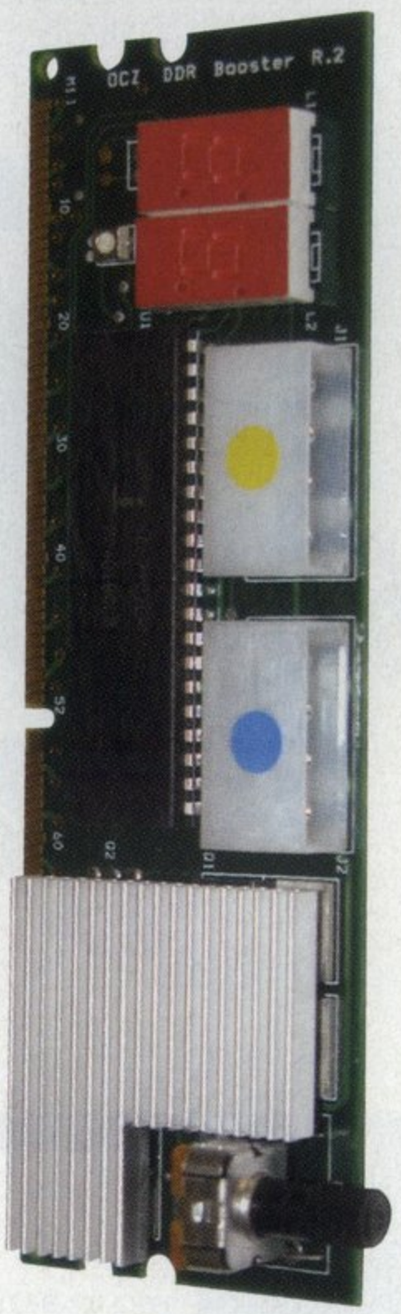
A spare DDR slot is obviously required to use the booster and it will work just fine in a dual channel configuration because it increases all memory voltage across the board. The real challenge however is the tweaking/overclocking stage and caution is mandatory because heavy handedness will result in a fried system.

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION
DIFFICULT

›Brute force memory overclocking

72%



Australia's best gadget magazine

T3

FUTURE PHONES

What's hot now, what's coming next

Australia's best gadget magazine
T3
THE PLASMA THAT GLOWS!
TURN YOUR IPOD INTO A PDA
MUST-BUY MOBILES
Every smart phone rated
+ Models you'll want in 2005
+37 MASSIVE REVIEWS
SIX PACK
We rate the best six-megapixel digital cameras
HUE BEAUTY!
20 OF THE COOLEST COLOURED GADGETS
Hollywood to go: We take home Archos' movie jukebox
WIN! Pivo Topfield hard disk recorders and an iPod mini

+

TECH VS. THE ENVIRONMENT

TURN YOUR IPOD INTO A PDA

THE PLASMA THAT GLOWS!

WIN! AN iPOD MINI AND HARD DISK RECORDER

ON SALE NOW

KEEP YOUR PC LOOKING FLASH

Health tips for your games machine

BY JON HICKS

DO IT... *NOW!*

Update your BIOS

FLASH! A-AAH!

PROBLEM Motherboard won't recognise new kit or performs erratically
REMEDY Update the BIOS to the latest version
RESULT Your motherboard is as modern as it's ever going to get

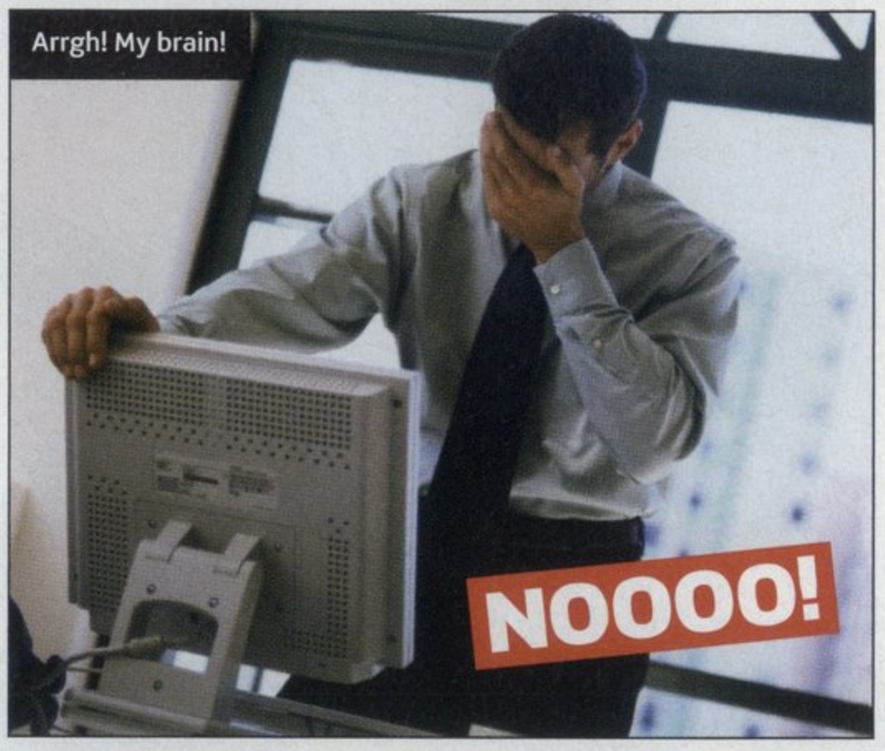
Actually, 'do it now' is a bit strong, since BIOS updates are not encouraged by motherboard manufacturers and are one of the most effective ways of destroying your PC without resorting to blunt instruments. If you don't have any obvious need to do it, then hold off. However, installing a new hard drive is just the sort of thing that can confuse elderly motherboards, and if your latest upgrade isn't working quite as it should then it's entirely possible an update for you lurks on some distant Taiwanese server.

Applying it takes no time at all. Note down your motherboard details and current BIOS version – this may be written on the board itself, and will usually pop up during boot. If it's too fast to read, go into the BIOS setup screen when you boot and disable 'Fast Boot' or 'Quick Power On Memory Test'.

Hie yourself to the slightly shaky English section of your motherboard manufacturer's support website and see if there are newer BIOS versions available. Make absolutely sure you've got both model number and version number exactly right, as the wrong upgrade can kill the board. If you can possibly afford it, I'd heartily recommend splashing out on a BIOS Saviour (from a site like **www.pcrange.com.au**) to avoid any horrible disasters.

ON THE DISCS Upgrade your games machine with our essential selection of utilities and apps > Toolkit

Once you've unearthed the flashing utility and new BIOS, extract it to a floppy disc and peruse the Readme file for instructions. If you are deeply paranoid about the process, which is frankly a very sensible mental state to be in, then create another disc with your original BIOS on it for reinstallation.



This sort of brain surgery doesn't play well with background applications so you've usually got to boot into DOS first – Windows XP users can get a Windows 98 startup disc for this purpose from **www.bootdisk.com** – and run it from there. In a perfect world, this will fix everything. If for some reason you don't live in a perfect world, you may find your PC doesn't boot at all, with the possible bonus that your graphics card won't fire up so you won't even have a screen to look at. Here's where that second disc comes into play; reach for it and your religious icon of choice, then refer to the manufacturer's website once more, this time for the recovery procedure.

UTILITY OF THE MONTH

F-LOCK

Anybody here got a Microsoft keyboard? Thought so. Anybody here deeply irritated at that idiotic F-lock button that defaults to the new shortcuts rather than the trusty function keys of old? Yes, thought so too. What you need is Jason Tsang's F-Lock Key registry tweak, which sets the old-school style as default and can even lock the Print Screen button for your screen-grabbing pleasure. You know in your heart that this is the way things were meant to be. Make your choice from **www.mvps.org/jtsang/flock.html**

DO IT... *THIS MONTH!*

Get more storage

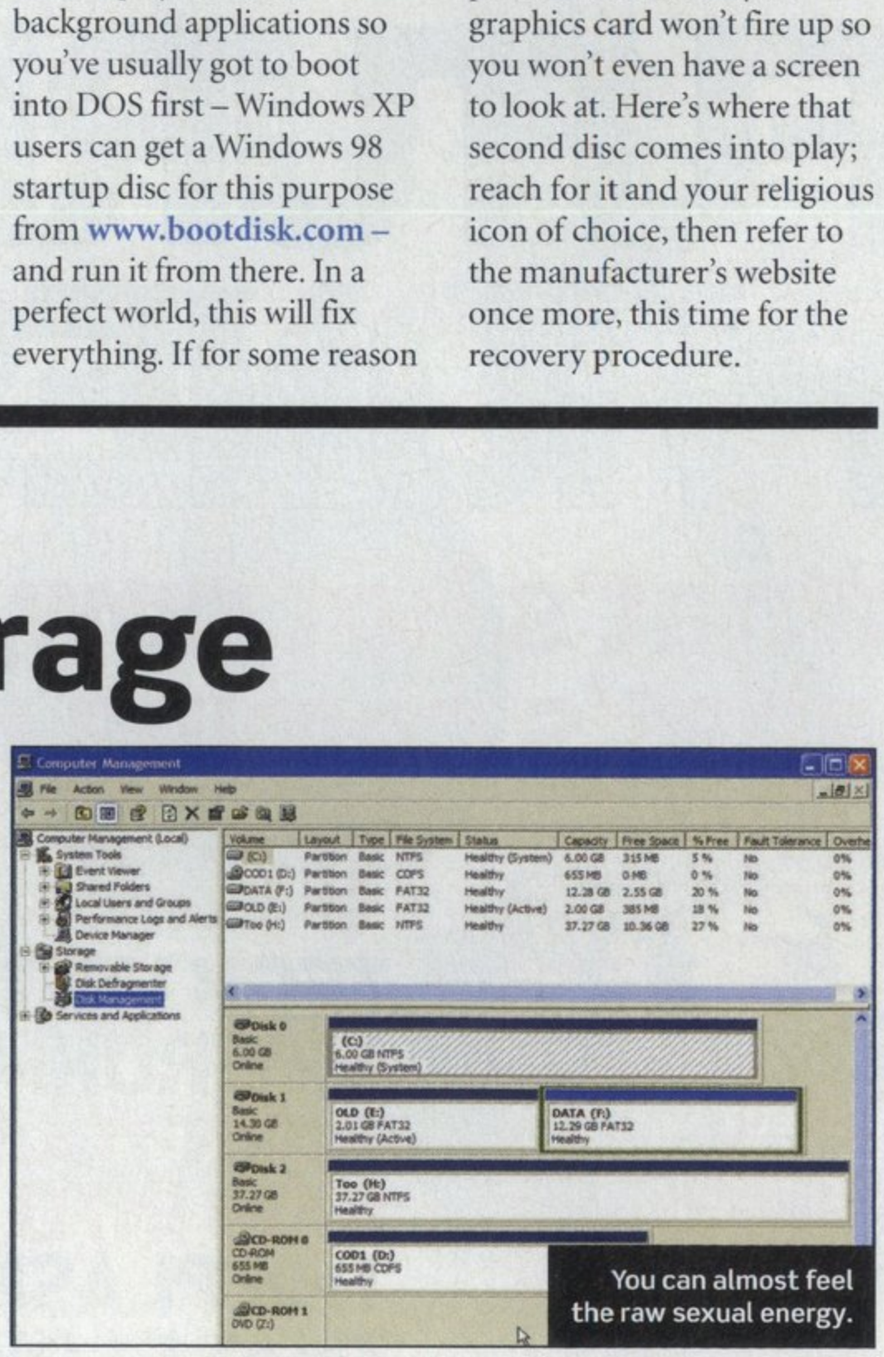
HARD DRIVES

PROBLEM You have no space to store games and all those special pictures
REMEDY A new hard drive
RESULT More storage space, faster access speeds

Hard drive capacities are, frankly, depressing. My first PC boasted a titanic 40Mb which was widely expected to last for the rest of my natural life. Now you can get 200Gb for $250 and fill it in under six months, which makes me feel old and broken.

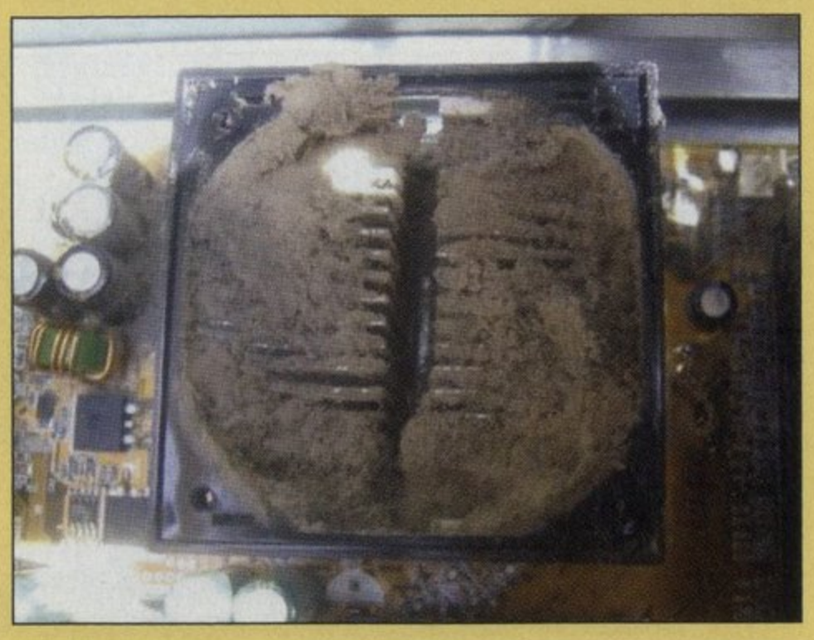
If you go for an IDE drive, adding it is simply a matter of setting the jumpers on the back to 'Slave' – consult the sticker on the top for details – and stuffing it into a spare IDE connection. In Win XP, format it as Basic and use NTFS unless you play ancient games, as it's a million times better than FAT32. In Win98 you'll still have to boot into DOS and use FDISK first.

The new serial ATA (SATA) standard is faster and the preferred option if your motherboard supports it, or you can splash out on a SATA PCI card. Installation is much the same, with the added excitement that it usually isn't recognised. If you're adding it as a second drive then the process should be the same as IDE, but if you're installing XP on it you'll need to boot from the CD, watch the bottom of the screen, and hit F6 when asked if you want to load third party SCSI or RAID controllers. These will be on the floppy disk supplied with the drive.



Essential Tech Tips

TECH SUBJECT
Cleaning Computers



It's a given that everything in life has its associated chore. While you can choose to ignore the festy toilet when it comes to your PC shirking a little regular cleaning will have consequences more disastrous than a smelly bathroom. Large build ups of dust can seriously affect CPU temperature and risk cooking your system. Of course before you start any internal cleaning, turn off the power..

1 The heat sink fan is a dust magnet and a heavy build up drastically reduces the efficiency of the fan. The blades are fiddly but cotton buds dipped in methylated spirits will do the job.

2 In situations where you replace the heat sink you should also clean the old thermal paste off the CPU. According to Arctic Silver, crusty remnants can be removed with a xylene based cleaner such as acetone, mineral spirits or high purity isopropyl. Basically nail polish remover is ideal; just make sure it is non-perfumed.

3 Dust also builds up on the exhaust and intake fans. Use cottonbuds and metho again or a small feather duster. Ostrich feathers are ideal because the natural feathers trap the dust rather than waft it around. Dust inside the case as well, as it's amazing how much can collect in there.

4 A dirty monitor can contribute to eyestrain because the eye muscles must work harder to focus past the smudges and smears. If you're in the habit of touching the screen, stop it now. CRT monitors can be cleaned using an eye-glass cleaning solution and lint free cloth but only distilled water and a lint free cloth can be used to clean TFT/LCD monitors. Don't use circular motions, up and down strokes will give the best result.

5 Everyone knows the benefits of cleaning a mouse in order to have the edge when gaming but few people remember to clean their mouse mat. Depending on the type of mouse mat you use Perspex and rubber polymer mats are best cleaned with a glass-cleaning fluid such as Windex. Fabric mouse mats shouldn't be exposed to moisture but can be brushed, preferably with a clothes brush.

6 Keyboards are a magnet for grime due to the obvious fact that it involves constant contact with a person's hands. The action of keys will be compromised by a build up of too much gunk, and it's inevitable that in a gamer's life there will be the odd coffee and soft drink splash. If it's too late and your keyboard is already grimy and sticky then the only real way to clean it effectively it to prise the keys off and clean them one at a time. Compressed air in a can is useful for blowing out loose grit before you use a damp cloth to remove the dusty gunk. Cottonbuds and metho will clean in between the keys.

DO IT... THIS WEEKEND!

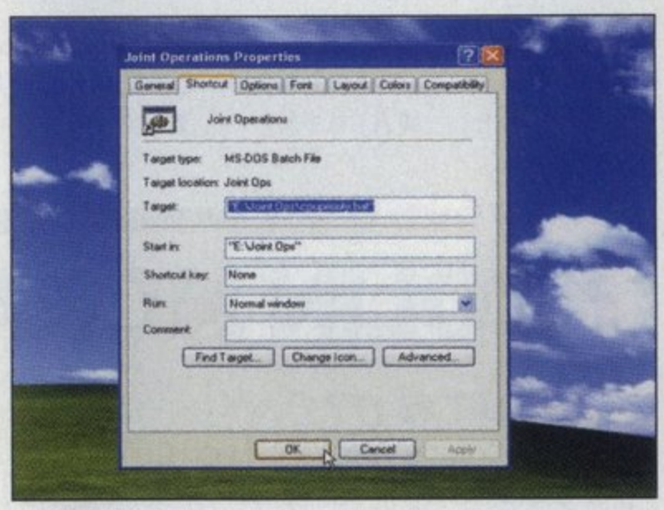
PERFORMANCE

Tune Joint Ops

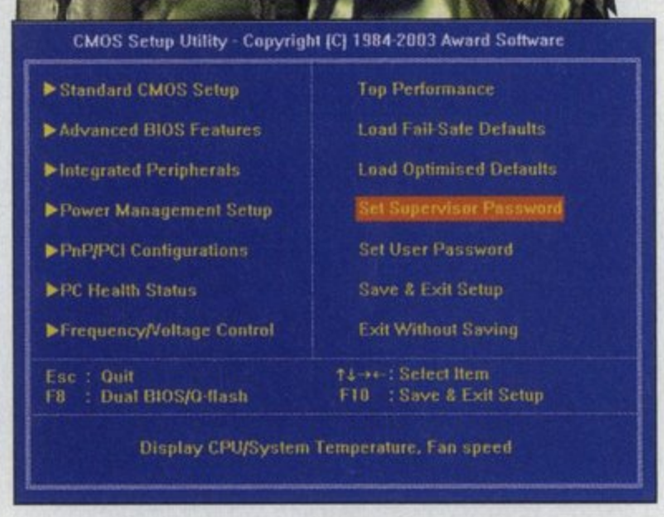
PROBLEM Online play is laggy and buggy
REMEDY Disable graphics features, adjust BIOS
RESULT A chance of better performance, or at least a soothing placebo

No prizes for guessing this was going to cause problems. Any game that's capable of supporting 150 players is probably going to have one or two performance issues, and it's not helped by the enormous load the game places on your processor and graphics card. Unfortunately, investigation hasn't revealed much that stands adjustment beyond all the usual stuff about getting the latest drivers, winding the graphics back until it looks like 1995 and disabling antialiasing – although there is a specific problem with ATi cards that means that if Frame Effects are set to High in the video settings then everything goes dark. If that's not doing anything for you, there are a few more speculative adjustments below – but be warned they won't work for everyone, so be sure to make a note of your original settings so that you can switch back if required.

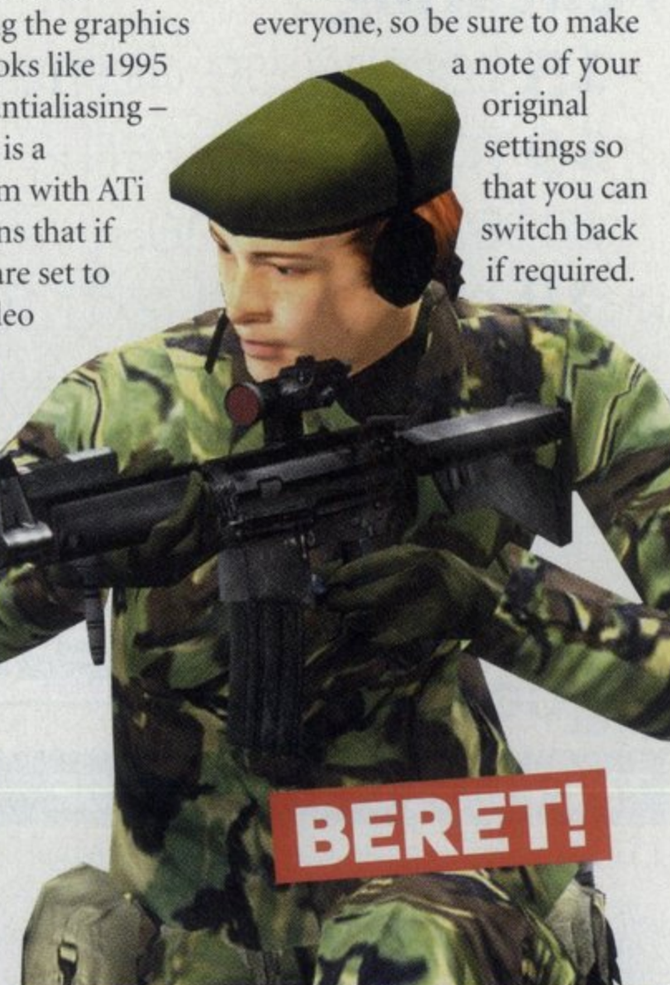
1 Type "start/high Jointops.exe" (no quotes) in Notepad and save this as cpupriority.bat, Save As File Type set to All Files, in your *Joint Ops* folder.



2 Right-click the game shortcut and change the target to point at this new file. If your mouse lags, try using the built-in Windows drivers rather than separate utilities.



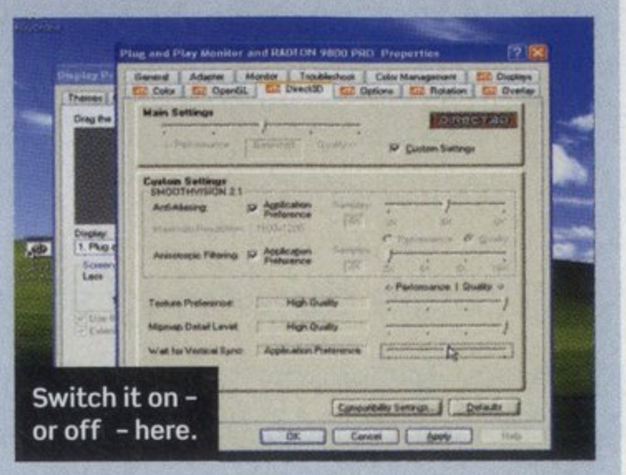
3 Another problem point has been AGP8x on older motherboards. Hit the BIOS setup screen and make sure AGP 8x is enabled, then try enabling fast writes and bumping up the AGP Size to 128Mb.



TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK...

"WHAT IS.... VSYNC?"

V-sync, or Vertical Refresh Synchronisation if you're in front of its mother, is a standard feature on recent graphics cards. Often discussed in tweaking circles, it's intended to prevent 'tearing' - an unpleasant visual effect where you get two frames on-screen at the same time, both crowded cack-handedly into the same space. It occurs, logically enough, when a new frame is sent from your graphics card to your monitor while the old one is still there. You display will show half of one and half of another, but so fast that all you're aware of is a horizontal tear across the screen and things being somehow subtlely wrong. V-Sync avoids this by delaying the new frame until your monitor refreshes, whereupon it can be slotted in unnoticed. The downside is that it limits your frames per second according to your monitor's refresh rate, which can sting on fast cards and slow monitors.



Switch it on - or off - here.

ON THE DISCS

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- **19** movies of ten different games
- **38** mods and extras
- **30** system-saving tools and utilities
- **5.2Gb of goodies!**

THE PCGA DISC PROMISE

- We pack every disc with the best new PC entertainment every month. If you can't find an item you were expecting, it probably just missed our deadline and you can bet we'll have it on next issue's disc.
- **PCs are inherently unreliable. Sad but true. So if something on your disc doesn't work then we'll try help sort it out. See our Troubleshooter guide over the page to see what help we can offer.**
- We scour the earth to bring you the finest playable demos, movies, mods and utilities that PC gaming can provide. But if we miss a trick then tell our Disc Editor all about it. Email **dan@derwenthoward.com.au**

DVD vs CD

1 DVD **6.12 CDS!**

The world is moving on and CDs can't keep up. Demos, movies and mods are bigger than ever and, inevitably, we can't fit everything on the ancient storage medium.

This issue, DVD-drive owners get an extra:

+ 11 playable demos
+ 17 movies
+ 7 mods and extras
+ 7 software tools
= 43 large download savers

NO DVD DRIVE?

- New games these days are becoming huge, and DVDs are the only option to practically store some of these games. You'll NEED one.
- **DVD drives are now dirt cheap. You can pick one up for as little as $70.**

CD

WARHAMMER: DAWN OF WAR

WHAT IS IT?

The first *Warhammer 40,000* game to rock rather than reek! For those unfamiliar with the franchise, it's based on a table-top minature wargame that marries sci-fi and fantasy ideas.

DEMO GOALS

There's a single campaign mission as well as two maps to skirmish on. The campaign mission essentially tells you what to do, so the following tips are things to keep in mind for the skirmishes.

Dawn of War is certain to kill minature sales for GW

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- You're probably used to just cranking out units from your base, but *Dawn of War* doesn't quite work that way. Each unit can be reinforced, bringing in new faces to replace dead ones, or to max the squad out. Use this to keep your units alive.
- The same window where you add troops also includes other buttons for bringing in a leader unit, as well as replacing one troop's standard weapon with a heavier option with a specialised purpose such as a flamethrower, missile launcher or heavy bolter.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Use just three combat squads to win. It's possible.

- Sure enough, vehicles can also be upgraded in this manner. For example, you can add extra laser cannons to your tanks, making them noticably more effective.
- Rush out and stake a claim. You need to build a listening post on the strategic locations around the map to earn cash. Upgrade them to earn more.

README

Developer Relic
Publisher THQ **Requires** 1.4GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left Mouse** select ■ **Right Mouse** Move/Attack ■ **Double Right Mouse** charge ■ **Q** stop ■ **V** move ■ **A** attack-move ■ **Z** attack-melee ■ **T** attach commander ■ **Y** rally troops ■ **R** reinforce unit

DVD

COLIN MCRAE RALLY '05

DEMO CHALLENGE
The Swedish rally in the Celica with damage turned to heavy.

WHAT IS IT?

Reacquaint yourself with Colin in our exclusive singleplayer demo. Try out three very different tracks, behind the wheel of three very different cars. (If you get an error message when launching this demo, be sure you have DirectX 9c installed. It's available at www.microsoft.com/directx.)

DEMO GOALS

It's all about racing against the clock in Time Trial challenge mode over stages that span the UK, Swedish and German rally courses.

The latest instalment of the long-running rally sim.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- Choose your car carefully. The classic Celica GT might look tempting but it's the most difficult to handle of the three on show.
- Don't forget that you can tune your car setup by turning on the Service Area in options. This takes you into the garage area where you can alter tyres, ride height and springs among others.
- Take the road surface into consideration. You can slide like a dream on the icy surface of the Swedish Hjalmarson course but halfway through you'll hit some gravel so you should put your foot down to capitalise on the improved grip.
- After you've completed a course you'll be able to race against a ghost driver on the same circuit. Simply hit Escape before racing and select Ghost Run in the options to turn on the ghost car.

README

Developer Codemasters
Publisher In-house **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Cursor Up/Down** accelerate/brake ■ **Cursor Right/Left** steering ■ **Space** handbrake ■ **V** gear up ■ **B** gear down ■ **N** hard steer ■ **1** change camera view

DVD

NEXUS: THE JUPITER INCIDENT

WHAT IS IT?
One level of intense interstellar 3D warfare, from the upcoming starship combat, real-time strategy game.

DEMO GOALS
Using your array of human vessels, you must defend a stricken space station whilst trying to slip away under the noses of your ambushers, the Gorgs, and call for assistance. Pay close attention to the communications, and remember that you can keep an eye on friendly ships on the left side of the screen.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Hold off the Gorg and keep the space station intact.

Your main goal is to protect the space station

PERFORMANCE TIPS
› It's a marathon, not a sprint. This is a real toughie – you're thrown right into the action with no tutorials or tactical advice, so prepare to exhibit epic patience.

› Your primary goal is to defend the space station, at all costs. Therefore, it's a good idea to bring all of your units into a central position within the arena as an opening gambit, and instruct them to hold their positions.

› Distraction is the name of the game. It might be worth making a sacrifice of one of your own smaller units in order to allow a scout to sneak under the noses of the Gorgs.

› If you decide that firepower is the way to go, make sure you weaken your opposition a little first by targeting your shots to take out specific enemy weapons (F6 key).

README
Developer Mithis Games
Publisher HD Interactive **Requires** 1.2GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left Mouse** highlight unit ■ **Double Left Mouse** zoom to unit ■ **Right Mouse** issue order ■ **Hold Right Mouse** manipulate camera ■ **Mouse Wheel** zoom in/out ■ **F1-F12** issue orders

DVD

DOOM 3 MODS

WHAT IS IT?
Our first compilation from the dozens of *Doom 3* mini-mods that seemed to spawn as soon as the game hit the shelves..

WHAT DO THEY DO?
These mini-mods might be tiny but they can make some pretty wholesale changes to your *Doom 3* experience. The Duct Tape mod for example has already made itself indispensible (although Ross insists it's sacrilege), strapping the flashlight to your weapons so you can peer into dark corners and then pour in bullets swiftly after.

Then there's the Ultra Extreme Quality mod that ramps up Id's engine to card-busting proportions by attaching extra shadows to all the characters and monsters. There's more graphics tweakery available from the Cel Shader mod which transforms the Mars base you've come to love into a cartoon world inhabited by cutesy demons. Disturbing stuff.

The must play multiplayer mod is undoubtedly the 32-Player tweak that transforms *Doom 3* from a tense four-player battle into a huge, free-for-all massacre. You should also try out some of the insane weapon mods, including Rocket Deathmatch which boosts player speed, reduces the damage you can inflict on yourself and hands you a rocket launcher as your only weapon.

The Hello Kitty flashlight - where cute meets creepy!

DEMO CHALLENGE
See how many Imps you can slay with a Hello Kitty flashlight.

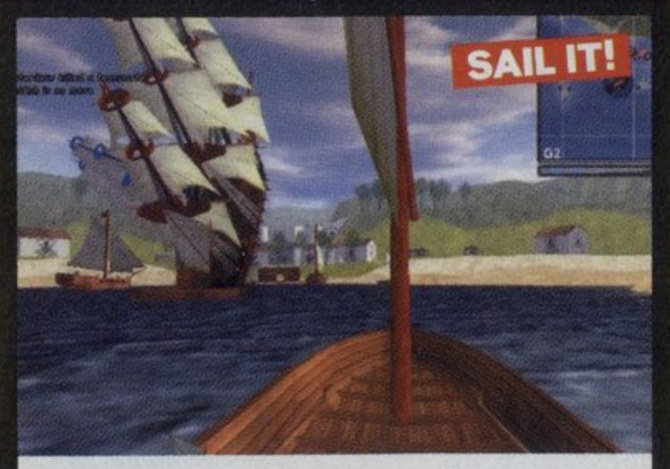
WHERE DO I START?
All our mini-mods come complete with a readme file. You'll need to unzip them. As a rule, most of these are .pak files – simply copy them to your main *Doom 3* directory and delete once you've had your fill. It might be worth making a backup of your installation if you have room on your drive.

README
Developer Various (see readme files)
Publisher N/A **Requires** *Doom 3* ▶

DISC EXTRAS

More than just demos...

+33 mods
Grab 16 of the top *Doom 3* mini mods, plus mods for *RtCW*, *Half-Life*, *BF:1942* and a collection of *Vice City* mod goods.



BATTLEFIELD: PIRATES! Now we've seen it all...

+28 movies
A peek at *Splinter Cell 3*, *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*, plus a superb 32-minute talkthrough of *Vampire: Bloodlines*.

VAMPIRE: Trokia get talkative.

+8 Galleries
Crystal clear images of tomorrow's games, including: *F.E.A.R*, *Nexus: TJI*, *Vampire: Bloodlines*, *Dungeon Siege 2* & *LotR: BfME*.

LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH: Gorgeous...

+Foul play
› Doing it tough in Doom 3? There's some handy console commands to be found in Extras!

+Patches
› Got a game with issues? We include the bigger patches on our discs as they become available. This month's fixes include:
Joint Operations
Doom 3 (beta patch)
Halo
Silent Heroes (*BF: 1942* mod)
D-Day Demo patch

See the back of your box for full disc contents

THE TOOLKIT

Essential tools and apps

Game apps

Match-making .....X-Fire
Server browser .....All-Seeing Eye
Voice communicator .....Skype
Chat software .....Trillian
Screen grabber .....IrfanView
Emulation .....Dosbox, ScummVM
Demo viewers ....Demofreak, Seismovision
Video capture .....FRAPS

Performance

Download manager .....BitTorrent
Uninstaller.....EasyUninstall 6
Video card driver.....Radeon, nVidia

Security

Anti-spam .....Spybot Search & Destroy
Anti-spyware .....AdAware
Anti-popup.....Coolweb Shredder
Firewall.....Zone Alarm

Media Management

File compressor .....WinRar
Picture viewer .....IrfanView
PDF viewer .....Acrobat Reader
Web browser.....Mozilla Firefox
FTP client .....Filezilla
Email client .....Mozilla Thunderbird
Music player .....WinAmp
Movie player .....Media Player Classic
Movie codec.....DivX

TROUBLE SHOOTER

Is your coverdisc playing up? Help is at hand

1 If the menu program does not automatically start, the autorun feature may be disabled on your PC. Go to the START/RUN command on the task-bar & type D:\IERUNNER.EXE or D:\MENU\INDEX.HTM (where D is the drive letter).

2 For problems with an individual demo or application, refer to the Help section on the disc. Also ensure your drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.

3 If your disc is defective then return it to the address below, along with a description of the fault and an SAE:
Disc Department, PC Games Addict, Reply Paid 1035, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355

4 As soon as we discover issues with programs on the disc, we will post solutions on the **PC Games Addict** forum. Check here to see if there's a quick fix:
http://forums.derwenthoward.com.au/viewforum.php?f=5

We can only provide assistance with technical problems *directly* related to our coverdiscs. The PC Games Addict discs have been thoroughly tested and certified 'virus free' by an independent organisation. We advise that you always run a up-to-date virus checker on ANY software before running it. Derwent Howard Pty Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or your computer system which may occur while using these discs, the programs or the data on them. Ensure that you have backups of data contained on your hard drives before running *any* new software.

CD & DVD

MASHED

DEMO CHALLENGE
Race to a time of less than 22 seconds in Time Trial mode.

WHAT IS IT?

A single and multiplayer demo of reminiscent of *Micro Machines* but reinvented in 3D. And given a lot of guns. A variety of weapons and game modes combine to form a unique adrenaline rush. Enjoy with friends.

DEMO GOALS

You are given one track, the building site-esque Tierra Piedra, around which to burn in either Time Trial or Quick Battle mode. Anyone who has fallen from a baked bean-strewn breakfast table in a two-inch long tank will know what's in store. You can also opt to play multiplayer on the same map in both the standard and teamplay modes.

Stay central to anticipate the twists and turns ahead.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› One crucial addition made here since the days of *Micro Machines* is the improved camera, which swings round bends to face the road ahead. Use this to time your cornering and you won't go far wrong.

› Power-ups are vitally important to your overall race strategy but don't be tempted to go off the beaten track to collect them. Focus on the race if you're out in front.

› In four-player battle mode, it's far better to hang around in the centre of the screen than to attack each turn. It gives you a better view of the track.

› The gentlest of taps on the arrow keys should see you safe. Straying off the beaten track has a distinctly pyrotechnic edge to it, so beware.

README

Developer Supersonic
Publisher Empire Interactive **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **S** accelerate ■ **X** brake/reverse ■ **A** fire power-up ■ **D** drop power-up ■ **C** insult

CD & DVD

D-DAY

WHAT IS IT?

It's Operation Overlord – or at least, a bit of it – recreated as a gritty, historically accurate real-time strategy wargame, with gorgeous graphics. Play against the PC or other people.

It's important to defend your tanks from damage.

DEMO GOALS

On the morning of June 6, 1944, you must guide American forces to victory in their quest to capture the German HQ on Omaha beach, Normandy in a full level from the US single-player campaign. Alternatively, play online or on LAN and challenge three other players on a multiplayer map with three game types on offer.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Try to finish the level without losing a single tank.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› One of the first targets of your operation should be destroying the German defence points sitting atop the cliffs using your air strikes. Obliterating these obstacles enables you to move in for the kill with your infantry and light machine-guns.

› Ensure your tanks and trucks are full to capacity with troops. If your crew numbers start dwindling, your tanks will be far less efficient on the battlefield.

› If you want to get even more out of your vehicles then be sure to include an officer in the crew.

› Always endeavour to keep your tanks in a good state of repair. You'll need them healthy if you're to triumph at the end of this mission.

› Always be on the look out for land mines and tank traps, navigate around them if possible or use your explosives specialists, the sappers, to remove them from your path.

README

Developer Digital Reality
Publisher Digital Jesters **Requires** 1GHz, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left Mouse** select unit ■ **Right Mouse** give order ■ **Space** pause ■ **F5** quicksave ■ **F9** quickload ■ **F1** turn on hints and tips ■ **Num+/-** increase/decrease game speed ■ **Shift+Tab** remove interface speed

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Lego Star Wars Go on, admit it – you want to play it too
Chaos Theory Ubisoft's plans to save stealth-gaming from stagnation
Ico 2 Why are set to Sony ressurect the platform game
Flawless Victory The secrets behind Blizzard's undying success story

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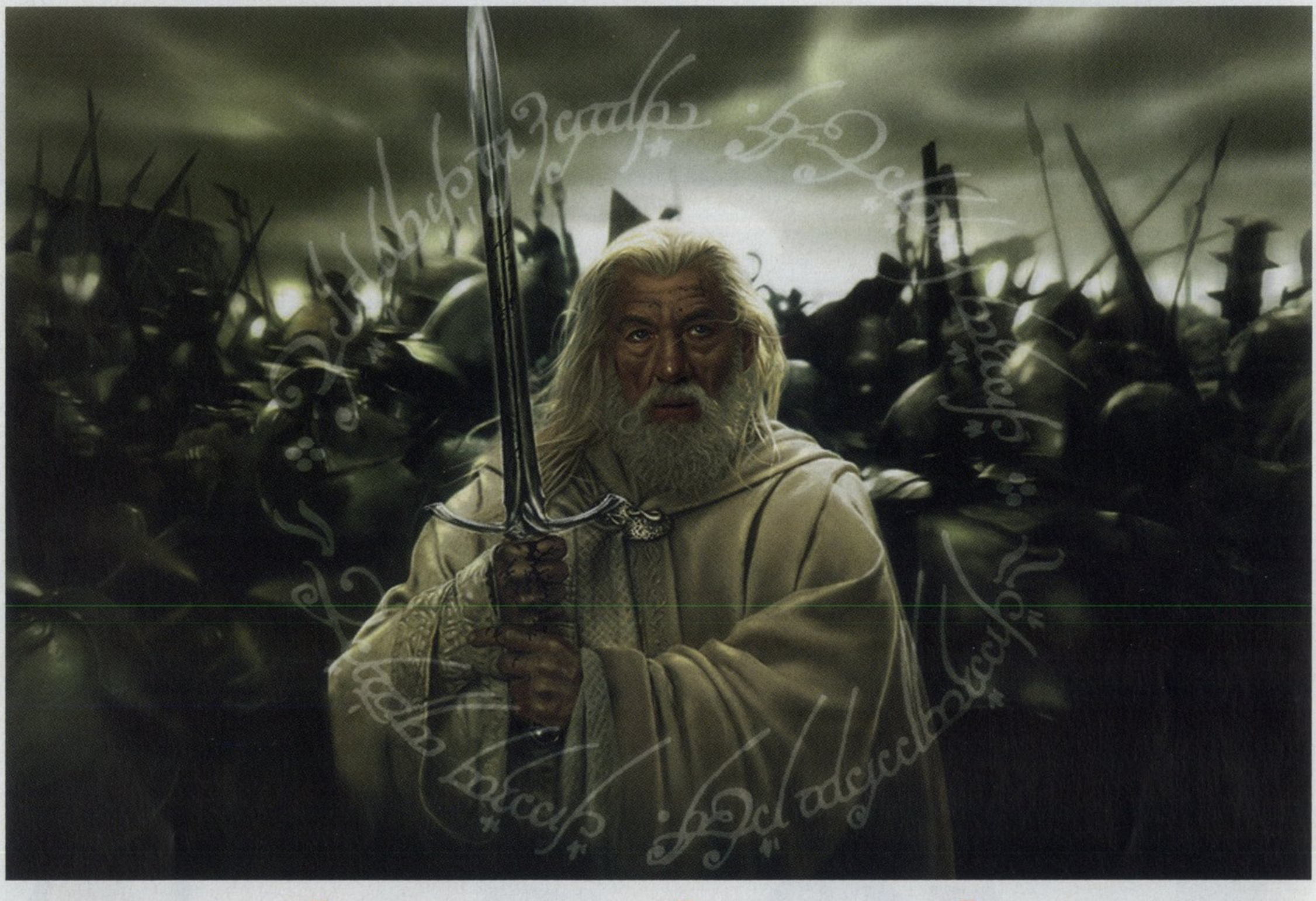
LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH REVIEWED



All magazine contents and gifts subject to change. Some gifts not available overseas.

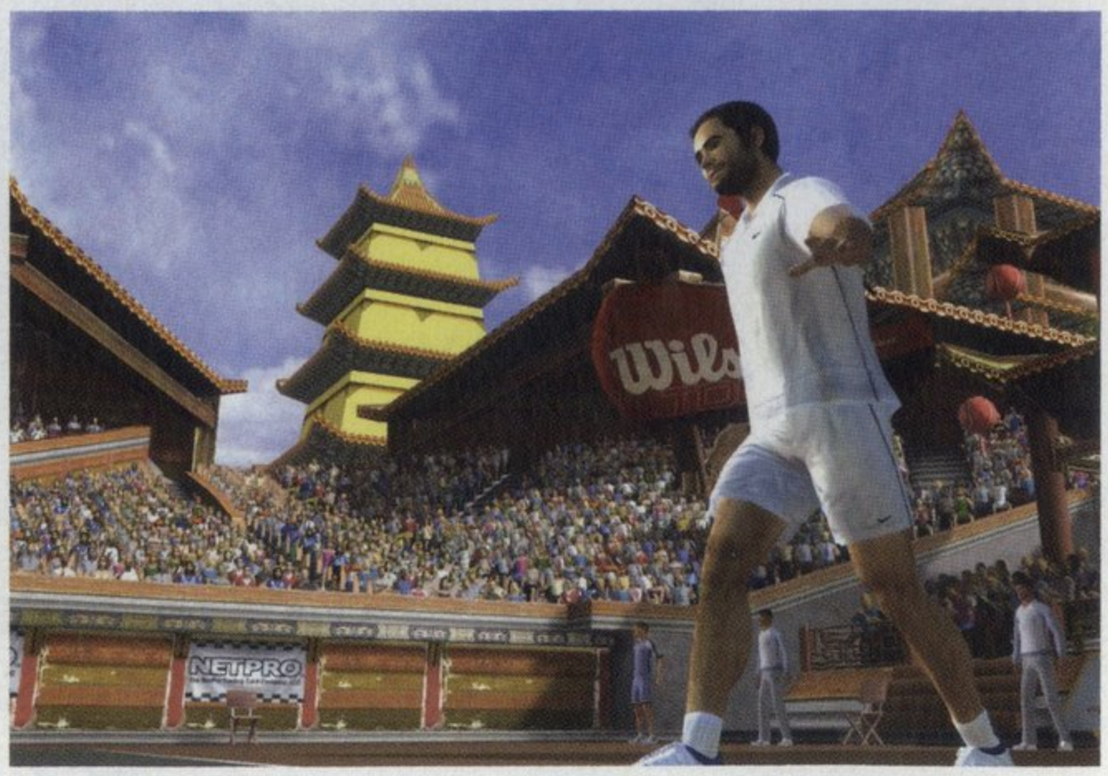
REVIEWS
Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault
Tribes: Vengeance
Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

PREVIEWS
Wartime Command
GTA: San Andreas
Brothers in Arms
Dungeon Siege 2

DEMOS
LotR: Battle for Middle-Earth
Doom 3
Sims 2 Body Shop v2

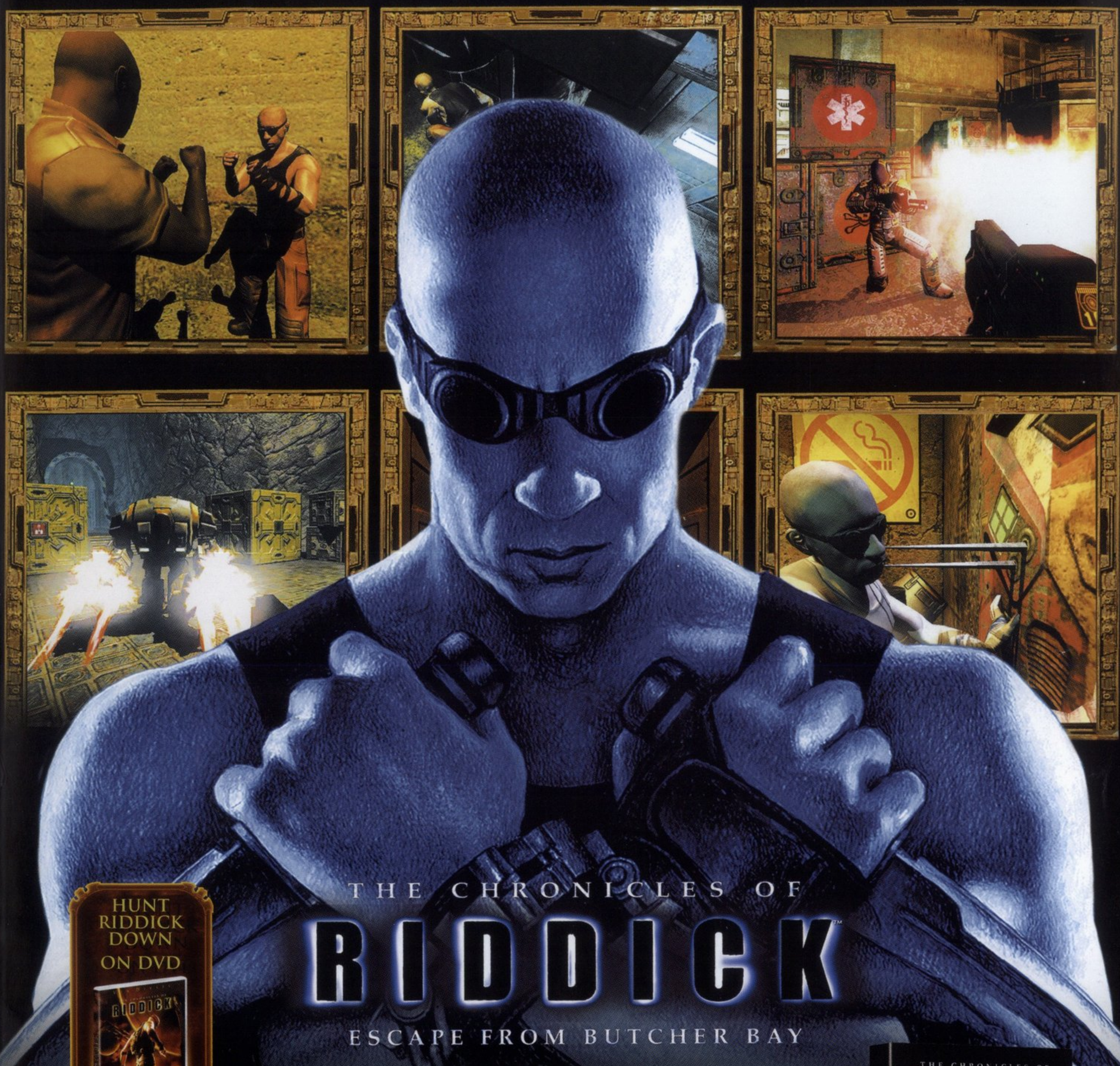
EXTRA-LIFE
D-I-Y: Sims 2 Body Shop guide
Metaball - UT 2004
UN gaming goodness

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3
Humorous 3D + Management = Gobs o' fun!



TOP SPIN
Best tennis game ever? The verdict awaits

THIS KILLER XBOX GAME IS COMING SOON TO PC!



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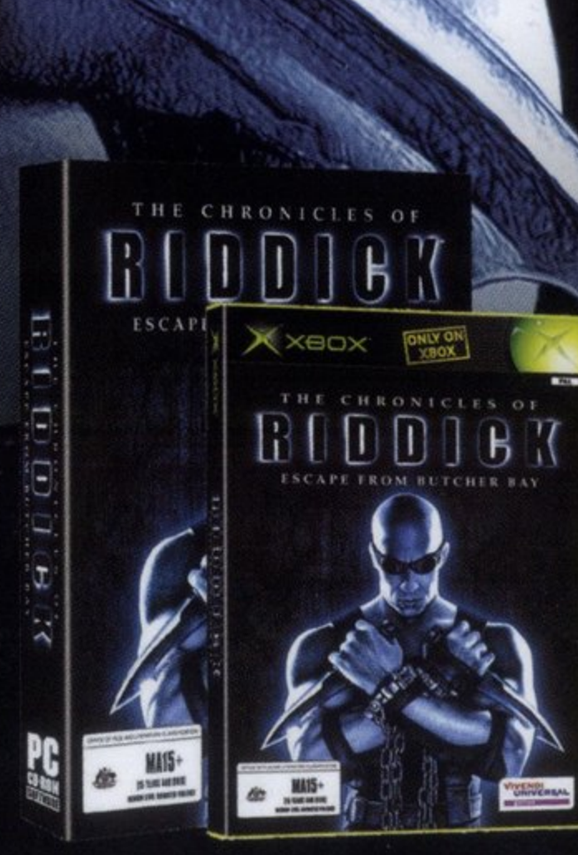

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